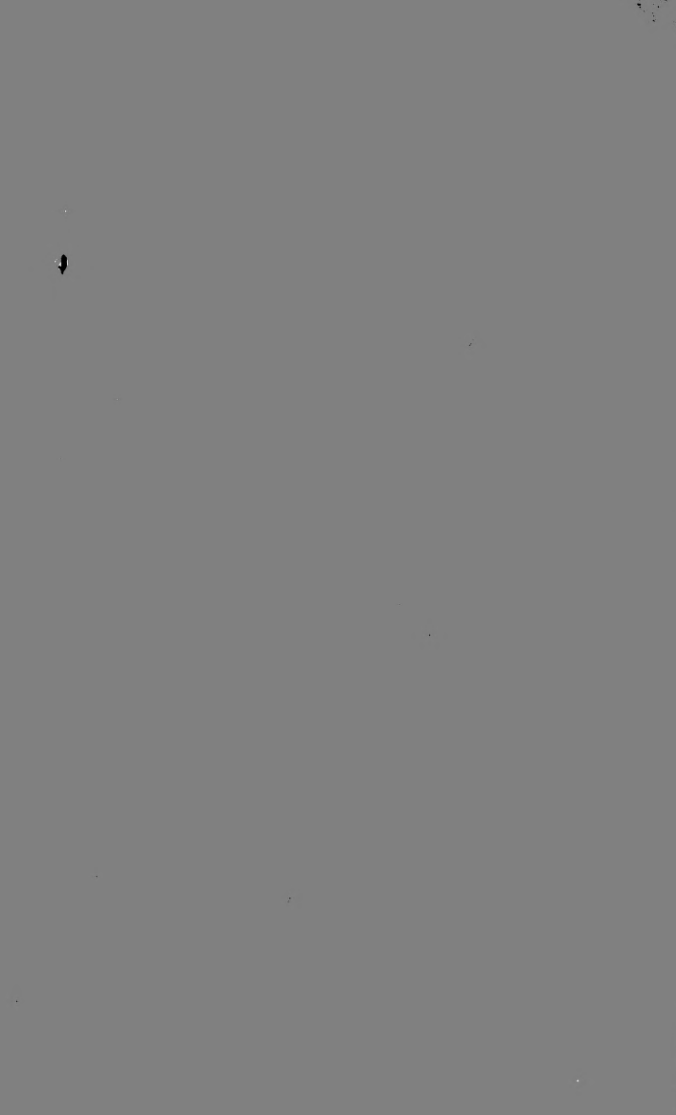




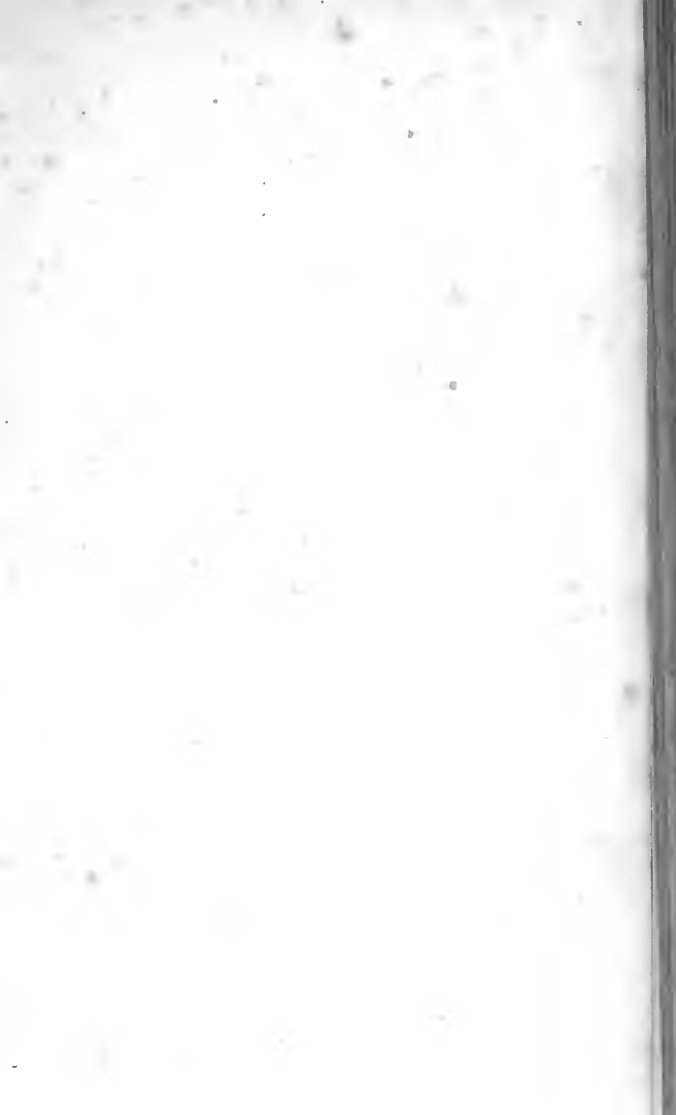
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THE ISLES OF LOCH AWE

AND

Other Poems of my Youth.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON.



LONDON:

W. E. PAINTER, 312 STRAND.

1855.

4737
I 82

TO M. H.

Most faithful guardian ! I have found in thee
A tried, true friend ; and if I warmly greet
This year, it is not that it sets me free
From silver fetters that adorn the feet.
Then leave not empty thine accustomed seat
In my heart's mansion !—reign there wisely still.
And when thy days of watching are complete,
Retain thine old, sweet influence o'er my will,
And take these songs of mine, some vacant hour to fill.

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“TRADITION SUPPLIES A BETTER FABLE THAN ANY INVENTION
CAN.”

EMERSON.

“LET NO ONE SAY THAT REALITY LACKS POETICAL INTEREST.”

GOETHE.

“MEN MAKE IDEALS—GOD MAKES FACTS.”

FROUDE.

“LASTING POETRY IS ALWAYS COHERENT, AND EASILY UNDER-
STOOD.”

ANON.

ERRATA.

Page 226, *for* Bulwer *read* Bulmer.

306, dele the apostrophes at end of stanza.

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DRAWN FROM NATURE BY THE AUTHOR.

ENGRAVED BY EDMUND EVANS.

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A view looking across the terrace and along the south front towards the chapel. See page 273.

II. THE ISLE OF ARDHONNEL . . . *Title page Vignette.*

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NOTE.

I hope to illustrate this work thoroughly with etchings of a larger size than the present form of the volume would admit. It contains at least a hundred available subjects; but to do any justice to them will be a work of time, and require long preparatory study.

If I carry out the plan, the etchings will be issued separately from the verse, and in parts.

THE ISLES OF LOCH AWE.

“Conjure up again the vanished shapes of the ancient ballad ; people these isles, this rock ; and cause, by might of spirit and power, the old times to flit by, clearly and truly.”—HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

THIS Poem comprises descriptions of the five most interesting islands on Loch Awe, introducing the traditions attached to them, and such personal details of the author's wanderings as were likely to assist the truthfulness of the descriptions.

Kilchurn is not strictly insular except when the Loch is high. It is, however, supposed to have been built originally on an island, since the isthmus is a sandy delta deposited by the river Orchay, at whose mouth the castle is situated. I have, therefore, thought it allowable to include this peninsula among "the Isles of Loch Awe."

The Introductory Chapter is devoted to a very picturesque legend accounting popularly for the origin of the lake; the concluding one contrasts the theories of modern science with this legendary palæontology.

The Lyrics—like the ballad stanza which heads each canto of the "Faërie Queene,"—are introduced as preludes to prepare the reader for the subject of the composition which follows, giving him, as it were, the key-note to the chapter.

I PASSED Loch Awe as tourists do,
Catching glimpses here and there
Of the scenes we posted through,

With companions full of care
About the comforts of the inns,
And about to-morrow's fare.

Thus the soul, to try it, wins
Glimpses of its Paradise.
'T was a judgment for my sins,

Yet a judgment making wise,
For I went another year
To work alone, and settled there.¹

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THESE isles were once the crests of pastoral hills
In an Arcadian valley, long ago :
So says tradition.² Bera owned the vale,
A coarse Diana, whose wide hunting-grounds
Were all the mountains round Ben Cruachan,
Whereon she dwelt ; for near the little tarn
That lies between the shoulders of the hill
There was a spring, with which her very life
Was so connected by some sorcery,
That if she failed to roll a mighty stone,
Sculptured with mystic characters and signs,
Over the spring before the sun had set,
Mysterious woes impended. By this tenure
Her lands were held, and even life itself.

One afternoon, outwearied with the chase,
She clambered slowly up the torrent side,

Above the tangled depths of the ravine,
And, finding in the basket-work of copse
A quiet nook of short, close, verdant grass,
Lay down to rest, for still the sun was high,
And she could reach the summit in an hour
From where she lay. The turf was very soft,
And she so weary that her hardy limbs
Would have reposed upon a granite bed,
So that she slept too soundly, for the sun
Reddened and sank while she was in that bower,—
And still she slept !

The morning dawned in mist,
And she, in fear of some impending woe,
Brushed through the dripping fern and underwood,
Treading securely those vast solitudes
As if by instinct, for the cloud was thick
Upon the mountain. Through the stony heath
She held her course ; and her short hunting-dress
Was wet about the skirts with myrtle shrubs
That from the cloud received a heavy dew ;
And her strong, naked limbs were often bathed
In fording mountain-streams that crossed her path :
And on she waded, buried to the knees
In the bright purple heather drenched with dew.

There were new rills and streams, for the soaked earth
Gave off the flood that poured all through the night
Into the natural drains. The Cailliach³ went

Down to a torrent's bed, and on a rock,
Washed by the spent waves at long intervals,
Stood whilst she watched the eddies of the pool.
In slow pulsations, like a rising tide,
The water left its foam-line on the rock ;
But in the centre of the seething pool
It rose and fell in heaps like furrowed hills,
With a deep-heaving energy ! Alive,
And hurrying down the pass, the waters came
In noisy masses, elbowing their way
Like an insurgent populace who crowd
The narrow streets of some great capital.
So came they, flinging up great drops of foam
As they approached the brink—a noisy crew—
Then tumbling, formed a broad and buttressed wall
Of shapely water, many tons in weight ;
And from its base rose columns of white mist,
Which down the stream were gliding one by one.
The fall itself was of a golden brown,
Flecked with white foam and fretted by the rocks ;
But when the sun came out the water showed
New brilliance, and some golden breaks within,
Like those mysterious fractures flashing light
In the fire opal. On the black, wet rocks,
High on the bank, were lines of creamy foam ;
And behind one of these there was a space
Past which the torrent shot—it had not time
To fill that hollow with its mountain mass,

But left a little whirlpool of white foam
Playing within it.

Bera held her way
Along the glen through which the torrent poured
In dumb amazement ; for in all her life
She had not seen in that great stony glen
A torrent bigger than a little rill,
Which after rain grew white with puny rage—
A thing to leap across. She held her way
Though underwood and on the open heath ;
And, for the glen was steep, another fall
Checked her excited footsteps. She could see
Nothing but white cold mist, but heavily
The water plunged ; and when a gust of wind
Flung broken drops against the wall of rock,
They fell like leaden balls from musketry
Flattened against a fortress. As she came
Nearer, the fall grew slowly visible.

The water rushed between two mighty rocks,
Then fell in one white column to the pool ;
And from its base shot rocket-flights of mist,
Darting in quick succession to the height
Of dizzy trees that to the precipice
Clung for their lives. The plunging of the flood
Was intermittent—an irregular sound,
And the light spray was carried by the wind
Like smoke ; and on it when the sun came out

An iris hung, whose pure prismatic hues
Were of etherial loveliness. The gleam
Passed, and the iris died upon the mist,
And its fair colours whitened into death.

The Cailliach traced this torrent to its source,
And it subsided slowly as she went ;
And the great stones began to raise dark heads
Above the white foam, and the Cailliach's heart
Grew weary as the torrent's force declined.

At length she reached that dreary land of stones,
That, on the highest region of the hill,
Lies, barren as the craters of the moon.
And there she found her sculptured talisman
Lying above the entrance of the cave
From which the spring gushed forth. The spring itself
Discharged a copious stream, but all around
Were marks of devastation. Then her limbs
Grew faint and weak, sensations new to her !
And as she leaned against her talisman,
The cloud began to roll beneath her feet,
And the fierce winds that roared about the peak
Carried the mist in fragments. Then she looked
Down the red furrowed sides of Cruachan,
In whose dark fissures, like the remnant snows
Of early June, the white rills seemed to rest,
Into the corrie where her dwelling was :

And lo ! her little tower was swept away,
And not a stone left standing ; and the heath
Was washed off like the dust of summer drouth,
And the red earth lay bare.

Then all the cloud
Was torn away by a most furious wind ;
And lo ! that peaceful, green, and pastoral vale
Was flooded ; and the windings of Loch Awe
Followed the windings of her own rich valley
Far southwards, until lost in distant hills,
Like a great serpent, that had swallowed up
Her flocks, and, gluttoned, stretched itself to sleep.
And all the green tops of her fertile knolls
Were islands on the water, whereupon
Stood houseless groups—the remnant of her tribe.

Then keen remorse, that felt like bodily pain,
Wrung the strong Cailliach's heart, and with a voice
That rolled like thunder o'er the lonely hills,
Deep, sad, and awful—she bewailed her loss
And her own fatal sleep. The cloud returned,
And never more she saw her heritage.
The stream subsided quickly, and she felt
Her own life ebbing with it. Faint and sick
She lay on her cold deathbed of rough stones,
With, for her pillow, that great talisman,
The safeguard of a tribe already drowned,
Because she had relaxed her vigilance

One fatal night—it is a common case.
She groaned—'t was like the moaning of the wind
Upon the mountain. Through the heavy mist
Ben Vorich thundered; and along the peaks
That half surround the crater-like ravine
The echoes came. Across the dying limbs
Drove level rain—cold, cheerless, pelting rain.
And then the torrent ceased its fatal flow,
And in the Cailliach's veins the blood lay still.

So was the peaceful valley of the Awe
Flooded and drowned for ever. Ask no more.
It is a flimsy, ill-constructed tale,
Which, like most stories of an ignorant time,
Arose in common metaphor at first;
And afterwards, when figure was disused
In daily speech, became a thing apart,
Misunderstood, and taken for a myth.
The Cailliach was the Spirit of the Storm,
A female Jove, who, from the desolate peaks
Whereon she dwelt, hurled thunderbolts and rain
On the low valleys, causing deluges,
Until the loch broke its old boundaries,
Flooding the lower grounds. But when the streams
Subsided, and the weather cleared again,
And thunderclouds had vanished from the peak
Of Cruachan, the Cailliach was defunct.⁴
She was a dying goddess—nothing more—

An aspect of the weather deified,
Like Thammuz or Adonis, for whose death
By the boar's tusk the Syrian damsels mourned,—
Summer made cold and dead by Winter's tooth.
Here in this northern region, where the rain
Beats down the corn, retards its ripening,
And spoils the harvest, the rain deity
Is made austere and rough—an Amazon
Dwelling apart among the barren hills.
Not so in Egypt. When Osiris died,
The priests and people mourned their saviour's loss,
The welcome God, whose wanderings from the bed
Of the low Nile did yearly fertilise
Its arid region, until Typhon came
The type of drought and black sterility,
In league with burning winds from Ethiope,
And lured the young Osiris at a feast
Into a strong and fair sarcophagus,
Then closed the lid, and drowned him in the Nile.

ONCE the Island of the Blest,
Then the stronghold of a chief,
Then upon its ruin-crest
Water-eagles built their nest ;
Now the sea-gulls cry for grief.

There are fables full of truth ;
Fraoch's tale is sadly true !
For how many in their youth,
Bitten by the serpent's tooth,
Die, or only live to rue !

Weeds are rank about the roots
Of ash-trees in the castle hall,
Where Fraoch plucked enchanted fruits
On the tangled bramble shoots,
Withered leaves in autumn fall.

II.

FRAOCH ELAN.

“ You cannot see the castle on the isle,
’T is hidden in the trees,” the boatman said,
As I was pulling carelessly, my neck
Twisted, like any bird’s, in eagerness
To catch my first glimpse of the ruined tower
That gives the isle such interest. At last
The trees grew more distinct as we approached,
And soon we landed in a little creek ;
And I left Dugald with the shortest pipe
That man could smoke — three quarters of an inch —
Unravelling some pigtail, which he stuffed
Into the bowl, and sat contentedly —
The hot smoke in his mouth, and the red weed
Under his nose. But I was all excitement ;
And, in a minute, through the wilderness
Of stinging nettles, that the poisonous corpse
Of the great guardian snake that Fraoch slew

First propagated here, I made my way,
And found at last a breach in the rough walls,
And entered. There were silly window-holes,
Made useless since the roofing had become
One great blue skylight—plaster on the walls;
Laid on, perhaps, when that true Jacobite,
Mac Naughten, secretly prepared himself
To do the honours to the wretched heir
Of empty rights, the young pretender Charles.⁵
For this, a royal gift, was formerly
Held by this tenure,—that the king himself
Should find a welcome here when passing by—
An honourable tenure. Times are changed;
And Nature takes again those chiselled stones
Into her keeping—types of man's decay.
From the hall floor, where kings have revelled, grows
A wild ash, springing freely to the light;
No floors to stunt its stature, and no roof
To slope the rain away on dripping eaves.
The wall still rears a gable, where for years
A water-eagle builded undisturbed,
By her at last deserted.

It is said

That one Mac Naughten, who had fought with Bruce,
Praised his opponent's valour with such warmth
To Lorn the little-hearted, that he earned
A cold rebuke from him, and endless fame
For that rare generosity of heart

Which could admire a foeman's qualities.
Rude chieftain, let thy great example be
Unto our modern baseness a reproach !
And though—as then—in this transition time
Men are divided into hostile ranks,
Let us retain a liberal estimate
Of those whose watchword differs from our own.

There is a myth, too, which provided me
A subject for some legendary verse.
My head was full of Spenser and his knights
When I first wrote it, and accordingly
'T is coloured from the first line to the last
With hues reflected from the Faërie Queene.
The simple Fraoch of the Celtic myth
Became a southern knight, armed *cap-à-pié*,
A most substantial knight. Yet none the less
The moral of the story is preserved ;
An essence giving lasting permanence
To what contains it, as Egyptian spices
Enclosed in mummy-heads instead of brains,
Defend them from the carrion tooth of Time.

Sir Fraoch loved a lady of Loch Awe,
And she returned his love ; but one bright day,
When with his dogs around him he received
A cup of wine from her, and kissed the hand
That gave it, swearing to return the gift

A hundred-fold in mountain venison,
She, laughing, said,—“The meat is very coarse
You knightly huntsmen butcher on the hills;
But if you wish to recompense me well
For that delicious draught of foreign wine,
Go—if you dare—to that enchanted isle,
Whose clime is like the autumn of the south,
Fruitful in golden apples; if you dare,
Go, slay the serpent, and return this night
Laden with mellow spoils.” He said, “I go,”
In earnest—she proposed it but in jest.
And when the lady saw his haughty brow
Full of grave purpose, she repented it;
And, growing anxious, urged him not to go,
Saying, “she never should forgive herself
If he were bitten by that monstrous beast
Which she had seen afar off more than once,
Stretching his mighty coils along the shore
Of that enchanted isle.” But his reply
Was stern and brief. “You told me, *if I dared*,
To go and gather what the serpent guards;
And those who heard your challenge, let them hear
My answer. If I am not here to-night,
Let none attempt to bear my corse away,
Lest they should share my fate.” He turned to go.
The lady, seeing all that she had done
With her unhappy playfulness, controlled
A woman’s feelings when she answered him,—

“Go then, and soon return ; bring back thyself
Though empty handed—leave the fruit to rot—
Thy love is not a child to pine for apples.
This thought may make you careful of your life,
That I confess its value to myself ;
Confession forced by rashness, which long years
Of faithful service only should have earned !”

Sir Fraoch soon put off his hunting dress—
Leggings of deer-skin thongs and tartan plaid—
And clothed himself, as if for common strife,
In shirt of mail with casque of polished steel.
Across his shoulder in its scabbard hung
A great two-handed sword, and by his side
A stout short claymore and a little dirk.

Thus armed he hastened downwards to the shore,
Where, high and dry upon the pebbly beach,
He found his long canoe of hollow oak,
And pushed it till it floated and the waves
Wetted his knees : the wind was strong that day.
His sword, unbuckled, soon was stowed aside ;
And, grasping both the rude unbalanced oars,
He turned the prow against the waves it shunned,
And, with strong efforts, slowly left the shore ;
And when he reached the middle of the loch,
The waves were cut and shattered into spray
By his keen prow. The morning had been bright,

But the horizon was no longer clear ;
For wild and ragged clouds began to rise
As from the western sea ; and when the wind
Veered from the north to westward those dark clouds
Came quickly, and a torn shred veiled the sun.
The waves now crossed the course of the canoe,
Striking its broadside, but the mighty oar
Pierced their strong, beating hearts. A gentle swell
Was all the motion, as Sir Fraoch pulled
Along the sheltering shore of Inishail ;
But when the isle was passed, a roaring squall
Came down the corries of Ben Cruachan,
Smiting the lake, that wrinkled and shrunk down
Beneath the blow. If, reader, you despise
“ Pond poets,” row alone, as I have done,
To Fraoch Elan in a gale of wind ;
And when a squall comes down the Pass of Awe,⁶
Crushing your boat with weight, or blowing it
Out of the water, scorn it if you can.
Sir Fraoch was no coward ; yet he watched
The waves as they approached, and turned the prow
Out of its course to meet the fiercest ones.
They did not heave like those of troubled seas,
But pitched and tossed the boat. At last the sun
Shone through an opening in the leaden cloud,
And on the rough green base of Cruachan
His slanting rays cast shadows long and dark,
But fell direct on that enchanted isle,



Whose brilliant green shone out against the blue
Of the dark distance. Then Sir Fraoch saw
That all the boughs were weighed with golden fruit ;
But when he sought the serpent guardian,
He only saw a line of leaping spray
Around the rocky beach ; and as he came
Nearer, he laughed aloud unto himself,
And said,—“ I thought so ! ’t is an old wife’s tale
To frighten children from the fruitful isle,
And fear confirms itself by evidence
Of sense, for terror sees what it believes :
But I, who fear no serpent, none behold.”
Thus did he give himself encouragement—
As men are apt to do when they desire
To pluck forbidden fruit. The serpent comes
To punish, but conceals himself at first :
The hidden spider does not show himself
Until the fly is caught—as men sometimes
Know to their cost. Sir Fraoch found a creek,
Wherein he landed. Taking his great sword
Naked, he left the scabbard in the boat.

Once on the shore he felt his spirit change
Within him, and delicious indolence
Creep through his veins. He roused himself at last ;
And, choosing from the thickly-planted trees
One on whose boughs autumnal apples hung—
Such as his mistress craved—he strode along,

Through beds of flowery heath and hyacinth,
Towards it. Then his nostrils and his ears
Were soothed with sound and perfume, and the harps
Of bards were hymning in the sylvan shade
The deeds of heroes ; but the noisy wind
Grew faint around the island, and the waves
Broke with a dying cadence on the rocks.
The climate was exotic, like the fruit,
Inviting to repose. Sir Fraoch plucked,
Filling the folds and corners of his plaid ;
But when he turned to go, the serpent lay
In deathlike stillness, coiled in the deep grass,
Between him and the boat : so all escape
Was hopeless, save through fight and victory.
He found himself—where many find themselves—
Placed, by his own sheer folly, face to face
With death or deadly struggle. There are those
To whom the life they lead is certain death,
And yet to whom the conflict with the sin
May also end in agony at last.
Still, if to such a hard alternative
You, by your errors, have reduced yourself,
Prepare for battle as Sir Fraoch did.
Better to perish fighting to retrieve
Lost freedom, than to die in slavery ;
And, if you are to suffer for your fault,
First slay the sin, that you may die reformed.

The serpent lay as if inanimate ;
But Fraoch grew impatient, and marched on,
Rearing his sword on high with both his hands,
And looking unto God for victory.
Then on the dull green body of the snake,⁷
The dappled, scaly hide began to swell
To twice its former thickness ; and a head
Nestled, encircled by a hundred coils,
With two small piercing eyes, as black as jet,
Which gazed upon him steadfastly. The hide
Swelled and contracted as the snake drew breath,
And all that length of former lethargy
Grew vital with fierce anger. Then the head
Reared up—thrown back—and poised upon the trunk—
Threatened Sir Fraoch, who stood motionless,
Eyeing the monster with a doubtful air ;
For serpents are not common enemies,
And skilful soldiers watch with greater caution
The movements of new foes. Sir Fraoch stood,
Bearing his sword on high, prepared to sweep
A cutting circle to protect his front.
Then from the serpent's jaws a barbèd tongue
Leaped forth three times, and was withdrawn again—
Swift as forked lightning from a thunder cloud—
A dull black tongue, like a long javelin
Whose point is poisoned. Then a fearful sound
Of inward rage, concentrated and harsh,
That serpent made in breathing ; and the throat

Grew livid, and the little glittering eyes
Sparkled, and the quick tongue flew forth again,
And the choked sound grew louder than before ;
And, spitting fiercely like a mountain cat,
The head was drawn more backward. Nothing more
Sir Fraoch saw ; but some hard obstacle
Blunted his sweeping blade, and on his breast
He felt a painful blow. Another lounge
The serpent made, but shorter, and the sweep
Of Fraoch's blade was swifter than before ;
And when the snake drew back its scaly head,
Its tongue shot out three times as if in scorn,
But it was shortened, and its barb was gone.
So Fraoch gained new confidence, and brought
His sword's point low before him, and rushed on
To charge the snake which crouched below the blade,
And quickly coiled about Sir Fraoch's feet
And threw him. Then his good sword, by the force
Flung from him, lay beyond his utmost reach ;
And tighter grew the coils, and round his chest
The serpent crushed the rings of his chain shirt
Into his flesh.

He struggled silently,
And drew deep gasps into his labouring chest,
As one who needs support in mortal strife.
Meanwhile the coils grew tighter, and the snake,
Sure of its prey, began to take its ease ;
And, though it almost crushed him, laid its head

In watchful rest upon the purple heath,
Waiting his death—nor would have waited long—
But when Sir Fraoch's strength was almost spent,
The snake, relaxing, left his right hand free
To draw his dirk, and instantly he ripped
The snake's defenceless belly, and in twain
Severed the living rope that bound his limbs ;
Then leaping forth recovered his great sword,
And, waving it before him in the light
Of the low sun, made good his own retreat.

Then snatching up his plaid, in which the fruit
Was wrapped, Sir Fraoch leaped into his boat,
And half the serpent to the water's edge
Crawled after, and the other half in pain
Writhed in the heather : he had slain the snake.

The wind had lulled, and o'er the Pass of Awe
Two golden-coloured clouds in the clear sky
Faded together as the sun went down.
About Sir Fraoch's boat two sea-gulls flew
With anxious, sorrowful voices, and their talk
Was full of sad foreboding. As he passed
The strait of the Black Islands,⁸ on his oars
Resting, the current bore him swiftly through
Between the mournful shores of those two isles,
Which, being wedded for eternity,
Sleep there together on the water's breast,

Divided only by a narrow channel.
Their shores are dark, but they are rich in wood ;
White, clean-limbed, muscular beech, and lofty firs,
Whose red boughs glow through tufts of sombre green
In the declining sun. Sir Fraoch's boat
Floated away till both those wedded isles
Lay dim and broad behind it, and the lake
Began to ripple to the brightening moon,
And in the clear pale sky the evening star
Became a visible point.

There was no wind,

And it was well ; for Fraoch's weary arms
Were not the same that cut the waves at noon ;
And all his frame was growing weak and stiff,
And very faint. A cold and creeping chill
Passed o'er his limbs like some uncertain wind ;
His throat was parched, his eyelids often dropped
Over his weary eyes, and in his ears
Strange murmurs mingled with the dip of oars.
Still round his breast the serpent seemed to wrap
Tighter and tighter.

Wearily at last

He reached the little pier, and left his boat,
Taking the dear-bought fruit.

The lady stood

Beneath an oak awaiting his return ;
But, when she saw him, would not seem to meet
Her lover, but returned into the house,

And there received him in the hall alone —
For all the men were out upon the hills.
Some deerskin mats were scattered on the floor,
And down Sir Fraoch sank on one of these,
Close by the blazing hearth. Then from his plaid
The shining apples rolled about the floor
Unheeded, for the lady saw no bloom
Upon the fruit, since all the bloom was gone
From Fraoch's cheek. He lay there till the heat
Quickened the feeble blood, and then his eyes
Fixed on the lady mournfully, and hers
Bent anxiously to his, and thus he spake :—

“O, love, the snake has crushed me ; but the fruit—
I tasted of the fruit—for in the boat
Hunger and weakness robbed me of my strength,
And so I ate—I do not fear to die—
That poisonous fruit ! Oh ! kiss me ere I die :
Chaste are such kisses when the blood runs cold
And the flesh yields to death. O, gentle love,
My punishment is just ! I expiate
The fault I have committed with my death.
Soon will the shades of heroes—whose abode
I rashly entered with this mortal body—
Receive my spirit and forgive my sin.
The snake is dead. Henceforth that isle will be
Even as the other islands of the lake,
For I have disenchanted it. I feel,

I feel the cold of death creep slowly up,
And gather round my heart."

These broken words

Died out in unintelligible sounds ;
And then the lady saw, with tearless eyes,
A change come o'er the features which she loved,
And, taking one of those fair poison fruits,
Ate—not as Eve, deceived by erring hopes,
But with a stern example, stretched in death,
Lying before her—and the fruit was sweet,
And death itself not bitter. So she ate,
Till she began to feel strange drowsiness,
And swift pains striking through her like sharp spears.
Then, with her lips upon her lover's cheek,
She grew like him insensibly at last ;
And, when the dying peats upon the hearth
Were silvery ashes, through the window fell
White moonbeams on those lovers, lighting up
The folds of her attire, that lay as still
As sculptured draperies, and his shirt of mail.
But both their faces were in deepest shade,
Close to each other. Thus the pair were found.

The Celtic myth is like the classic one
Of Hercules and those rare golden pippins
Which, tended by the fair Hesperides,
And guarded by a hundred-headed dragon,
Bloomed in some garden far beyond the sea.

The ruined castle and the ancient myth
First drew me to the island. Afterwards
I used to row in the long evenings,
And rest an hour amongst the heath alone.
There is a little bay, and a proud cape
In miniature, that juts into the lake
Like a huge headland, which, eternally
Planting its foot deep in the furious waves,
Steps boldly out to meet the winter storms.
I landed in this bay, and moored my boat ;
Then climbed the little cliff, and on the top,
Beneath the branches of its cresting firs,
Sat, deep in purple heather and wild flowers,⁹
Absorbed in contemplation, gaining wealth
Of poesy, as bees, that come from far,
Enrich themselves upon sweet island flowers,
Gathering wild honey all the summer days
For men who cannot find it for themselves.

THE fairest island on the lake
Is the island of the nuns ;
And I love it for the sake
Of those persecuted ones.

Lonely now, and desolate,
Rise the hills of Inishail ;
And a sea-gull and his mate
Round it daily do bewail.

Flying round it to and fro,
Making some unhappy search,
Round about the tombs they go,
Round about the ruined church.

III.

INISHAIL.

THERE is a fair green island on Loch Awe,
With two large knolls. The twin Black Islands near
Are crowned with noble beeches, but the hills
Of Inishail are very bare and bleak ;
And on the southern hill a ruin stands,
With many tombstones round it, rudely carved
With swords, and crosses, and quaint images,
Cross-hilted swords, and effigies of knights.

I haunted this fair island of the dead,
Long after sunset, many summer eves ;
For though Loch Awe has many solitudes,
She has not one like lonely Inishail.
And I have often thought, when sitting there
Amongst the tombs, how sad it must have been
When those poor simple women were expelled,
Who left the outer world, and made, as nuns,

A holy household on the little isle.¹⁰
Good people love the spots where they have dwelt,
Because the silent stones are witnesses
Of naught unholy ; and the furrowed hills
Seen from this island would be written o'er
With the sweet record of unblemished years
To those Cistercian sisters. There are some
To whom these lines will be an enigma,
For unto them the regions of the earth
Are haunted by the ghosts of former sins,
Demons which drive them out of Paradise
For ever seeking rest, yet finding none.
It was not so — it could not have been so
With those Cistercian nuns of Inishail.
Not that retirement is more safe from crime,
Or more conducive to the exercise
And free enlargement of the sympathies,
Than crowded cities, but to live for years —
For *life* — on such a narrow isle as this,
Argues a mind at peace. They spent their time
As piously as “women of the world.”
As to their creed, I quarrel not with that ;
Perhaps the Abbot Lord of Inchaffray
Believed the new to be the better card
To heaven's high places, as to those of earth ;
At least he played it well : but they, poor souls,
What should *they* know of creed and its reform ?
They only did as pious women do,

And will, perhaps, for ever,—say their prayers
As they were told, and yield obedience
To custom, lest to doubt or disobey
Its dictates might be sinful. They were thrust
Out of their isle for Romish practices,
And must have marvelled that the sacred rites
Which all the land had revered so long
Had such a slackened influence. Perhaps
They thought the world gone mad, or near its end,
When people could no longer be content
With forms that served their fathers very well,
And in their own case, as a guide of life,
Were better than new teachings—for the food
Which it is used to suits the stomach best.

Poor Inishail! The hand of sacrilege
Has spoiled its sculptured tombstones, and beneath
The sword of knighthood rest the basest churls
In churchyards far away.¹¹ And so, indeed,
The dead may rob the dead of their last roof,
Until the living fancy—the sad fools!—
That some old Highland cobbler's resting-place
Is the last bed of valour. Let them dream,
For sentiment lives cheaply—let them dream!
As people dream of rotting near their friends
In English graveyards, when the sexton knows
That six years hence 't were hard to find a corpse
That lodges now beneath the monuments—

Marbles which bear false witness to the fame
Of the deceased, but shall be lying guides
As to his very grave!—Yet, after all,
Some may be undisturbed on Inishail:
It is not crowded, there is room enough.
And when I see a cluster of old stones
Deep in the grass and weeds, I would receive
Their evidence. On one beside the church
Are seven figures—Jesus on the cross,
Two women, and four knights in suits of mail;
Almost grotesque, for they have monstrous heads,
As though the sculptor had a comic turn;
Yet are they full of life and character.
The nuns are swinging censers to the cross;
The knights stand by to guard it. On the stone
Between the figures, worn by frequent rains,
There is a shield, whose charge might well be borne
By one whose very hearse had crossed the waves,—
An ancient galley, high at prow and stern,
With one stout mast between them, short and strong—
The ancient bearing of the House of Lorn.
There is a harp, too; and a battle-axe;
And what I thought a standard, which a knight
Rears proudly. There are many tombs besides,
Carved with designs, some really beautiful.
But what I like about this ancient work,
Is that, however rude, it bears the stamp
Of living hands. Its mouldings are not straight;

But men cared less for rule when those were done,
And more for brains. There is a modern tomb,
Whose shadow falls on those grey slabs of stone —
A common modern tomb, so prim and neat,
That from its square-cut mercenary work,
Done by the saw at such a price per foot,
With an inscription clear as modern type,
So much per letter, you would gladly turn
To shapeless sculpture, whose rude symbols gave
Subject for thought. The hand an author writes
Is something, but the matter something more.

Let skill have due respect: mechanic skill
And science have done wonders for the world.
Therefore, of all the legends of Loch Awe,
None interests me more than that of him
Whose cunning hand the worms of Inishail
Have stripped of its quick sinews. Though the story
Has grown in time so rich and marvellous,
That Spenser's fictions, or the thousand tales
That soothed in Cairo's sleepless palaces
The Father of the Faithful do not task
The reader's fancy more — still it has been
Related gravely to believing ears
In Highland huts as I relate it now.

On Inish Drynich, fifty years ago,
There stood an ancient house, whose oaken roof

Was joined so neatly that it might have grown
Together like the roof-plates of the skull.
It had been morticed by a famous wright,
One Mac Intyre, of whom the peasants tell
A wild tradition.¹² When his fame had spread
Throughout the land it crossed the northern sea,
And reached the shores of Holland. Now there were
Three Dutch mechanics, whom the homely life
Of Hamburgh did not suit ; for they were young,
And wild, and discontented with their lot,
Thirsting for strange adventures, when they heard
Of Mac Intyre and all that he had done,
And much that he had not. So, being fired
With envy of his fame, they planned together
To go to Scotland to usurp his trade.

They made three wooden horses which they rode,
And in them placed such wondrous mechanism,
That they moved swiftly, even as living steeds.
And after weeks of travel they were seen
Riding their wooden steeds towards Loch Awe ;
So all the country knew of their approach.

Then Mac Intyre's apprentice running in,
Exclaimed, " I see the Dutchmen on the knowe."
And Mac Intyre said, " I will take your place—
You mine ; and I will say the master's out ;
And you must not be seen till dinner-time."

So when they came, the master at the door
Said, "Sirs, the master's out; but I have been
Apprenticed to him now near seven years;
And though my skill is botchwork unto his,
It may amuse you till he comes himself."
So they dismounted, and the master led
Their wooden horses to a sheltered place:
He was not absent long, but in that time
Played a strange trick upon the foreigners.

Then in the workshop he began to tell
The feats of Mac Intyre; and taking up
The iron blade of a huge battle-axe,
Fixed it between the jaws of a great vice,
Edge downwards, then resumed his former seat;
And, telling wondrous stories all the time,
Worked at the wooden handle, shaping it
To fit the socket. With his practised eye
He judged the size correctly, though the axe
Was many paces distant; and at last,
Poising the handle like a javelin,
Hurled it direct with such unerring force,
That with the square-cut end fixed tight and firm,
It quivered in its place. The Dutchmen stared,
And, in amazement said to one another,
"If the apprentice can perform such feats,
We're no match for the master. Let us go:
We've seen enough."

So they departed thence,
Mounting their wooden steeds; but when they turned
Their horses southwards, one began to rear
And paw the air like some winged Pegasus;
And, taking many leaps, did bound away.
And—if the legend be incredible
To readers of this unbelieving age,
I cannot help it, 't is no fault of mine—
At last he fairly swam in the thin air
As if in water, and was shortly lost
In a great cloud that lay on Cruachan.
The other two were not companions long:
For one was mounted on a runaway,
The other on a stupid sort of brute,
Not more alive than wooden flesh might be.
So they were parted; for the runaway
Refused all check or guidance, rushing on
Across the stony moors, until at last
He stuck in a black bog, and threw his rider,
Whose skull was fractured on a block of granite.
The other would not stir, so he who rode
Dismounted, very thankful for his fate,
And walked away, delighted to escape
The house of such a wizard.

Inishail

Seems such a happy colony of death,
That I should little fear to emigrate,
And leave that wooded shore whose harvest sheaves

Stud the rich banks of that symbolic river,
Which, torn with pain amongst the pointed rocks,
Lays out its depths in shallow weariness,
Just deep enough to bear the funeral boats,
And swift enough for their unhurried motion.
I long for that sweet indolence of death,
Which they who sleep beneath these scattered stones
Enjoy without a hope or wish for change.
They change in truth, but passively receive
Again the impress of the types of God,
Renewed without exertion of their own.

Death is as healthy as the healthiest life.
It is at once the consequence and cure
Of all disease. It is as natural
As quiet sleep—as kind a gift of God.
O God! I thank thee that the fear of death,—
From which arise all craven phantasies,
On which are built all tyrannies, which makes
Strong spirits bow, and heroes vacillate,—
Has been destroyed within me.

Watch a corpse

In its serenest beauty, and believe
That in that calm expression of deep peace
There speaks a revelation.¹³ Inishail
May be indeed an island of the blest,
With narrow dwellings sprinkled on the green,
A hamlet filled with peaceful islanders.

FROM a beach of yellow sand,
Ribbed as if by ocean waves,
Rise the towers ; and, while they stand,
Shall none forget
The worst of all the lordly knaves
That ever yet
Plotted villany in the land.

Where is Lord Mac Corquadale ?
Where the pious dame who built
The castle that he did assail
And almost won
By the secret arts of guilt ?
They are gone !
But they live in song and tale.

He lives ever in our hate—
She for ever in our love ;
And the years that she did wait
Had their reward,—
Guided by the powers above
Came her lord ;
And nearly—nearly—came too late.

IV.

KILCHURN.

Now, as I write, it is a time of war ;
And wives of soldier-peasants, soldier-peers,
Grow pale and weary with anxiety.
Some sitting in sad luxury alone,
With feet half buried in the velvet pile
Of noiseless carpets ; and a newspaper,
Or the last letter from the one beloved,
Laid on the sofa — every syllable
Already grown familiar as the words
Of hollow social use.

The nights are long,
And very cold — the butler stirs the fire.
She draws her silken scarf about her neck,
And shudders — shivers — though the room is warm ;
For on the heights before Sebastopol
Two armies lie like cattle on the ground,
Freezing beside low watchfires in the night.

She will not have a guest to watch her grief.
She sits alone and reads of battle-wounds,
Until their frightful details seem to her
Prophetic of *his* fate—and to a brain
So wrought upon by one perpetual fear,
The fear itself becomes reality.
She sees him wounded—dying—dead as those
Who lie in heaps together in the trench,
A ready grave filled up with its own earth
On the cold heights of Alma.

What to her

Is all this wretched luxury, unshared
With him she loves? The comforts of her home
Seem to reproach her, and she scarcely eats
A richer meal than the coarse ration doled
To the poor tattered private. All alone
She walks along her silent corridors,
Stately in grief, and seeks her sleepless bed,
There to lie brooding till the waxen lights
Die in their silver sockets, and the fire
Sheds an unsteady twilight on the wall.

Happy the soldier's wife who toils for bread,
And ekes her living out on charity,
Compared to her; for labour brings sweet sleep,
And in itself supplies another care,
And so relieves the mind: but on the rich
More heavily fall afflictions of the heart,

For grief becomes the business of their life,
As pleasure was before. A common truth !
The law of compensation working out
The just decree of our equality.

Pause with this picture. Let it do its work.
You see such sufferers in your daily life :
Perhaps the fearful pain of their suspense
Excites in you—it ought—true sympathy.
If so, you are prepared to follow me
Into the past. These sorrows are not new.
Alas ! all grief is ancient in the earth—
War, absence, fear, anxiety, suspense—
Old as the story of the siege of Troy,
Old as the legend of Penelope.

A Highland dame, four hundred years ago,
Bore the same trial—harder in degree ;
For she had not our steam and telegraph
To bear more swiftly than a carrier-dove
Tidings of soldiers serving in the wars.

Sir Colin Campbell was a knight of Rhodes.¹⁴
For seven years he risked continually
His life in foreign warfare. Seven years
Waited the lady Margaret his wife,
Like a poor widow, living sparingly,
And saving all the produce of his lands

To build an island fortress on Loch Awe,
There to receive Sir Colin, and so prove
Her thrift and duty. Little more we know
Of what she did to occupy her time :
Perhaps a narrow but perpetual round
Of mean and servile duties, too obscure
To be recorded, kept her nerves in health.
And truly it is well to handle life
Not daintily. The best resource in grief
Is downright labour. This at least we know,
That the good spouse of that brave Highland chief
Looked to her husband's interest and hers,
When from her quarries silently—before
Loud blasting tore the layers of the rock—
The clansmen ferried loads of idle stones
Across the water ; and on what was then
An island, and is yet in winter floods,
Made them most useful servants—trusty guards
Of all the treasure of a Highland chief—
His wife, his tail, his cattle, and his goods.

But he was absent. After many years
He rose, afflicted by a painful dream
In Rome, whereto his wanderings had led ;
And, seeking counsel of a Roman monk,
By his advice set out at once for home.

I will not dwell on dangers by the way,

Which may be well imagined in an age
When men were rooted like the very trees,
Each to the spot of earth where he was dropped
Out of the womb—transplanted, if at all,
With risk to life and limb, and slowly moved
By rude conveyance over land and sea,
The prey of countless obstacles and storms.
I will not dwell on these, but come at once
To the last hovel where he passed the night
Ere he arrived at home—a dreary hut,
Yet welcome to a hardy mountaineer
Like that Sir Colin—and his namesake now
Sleeps, it may be, more roughly with his men
On the cold frosty earth, while in his ear
Boom the near cannon of the Muscovite.

A widow's cottage—not with jessamine
And trellised roses on a whitewashed front,
And a nice inmate with a tidy cap
Smiling kind welcomes—no! that widow's hut
In the far Highlands was a wretched den
Of lonely squalor; and its occupant
A weak and withered creature, in whose brain
Old superstitions found a kindly soil,
As wailing plovers haunt the poorest land.
The widow's hut was built against a mound,
Which served it for a wall; and since the roof
Was lower than the mound that sheltered it,¹⁵

The winds flew over, singing harmlessly.
The stones were smooth from friction in the stream,
Where they had rolled in centuries of floods,
Not chiselled into shape. The walls were dry,
Built without mortar, and the roof was thatched ;
And in the thatch a little orifice
Served for a chimney. Thence a wreath of smoke,
Pure bluish-white, sweet vapour from the peat,
Ascended to the level of the mound,
Where the wind caught and carried it away.

Within, the scene was very picturesque.
The widow and a haggard mendicant
Sat on two little stools. A cheerful fire
Burned on the floor of clay, from which arose
A cloud of smoke that filled the little room.
The walls, the rafters, and the floor were black :
And through the smoke the widow's wrinkled face
Appeared as mournful as the wrinkled moon
Through mist. The visage also of her guest
Had such a strange expression, that she stared
At him—and he on her—but neither spoke.

At last he rose, and on the dusty floor
Spread out his plaid, and stretched himself to sleep.
His hostess kept her place until he breathed
With strong, deep inspirations—then approached ;
And, lifting very gently from his breast

The corner of his tartan, pulled away
The under-garment till the skin was bare ;
And by the cheerful blaze upon the hearth
Beheld a scar that was not lately healed.
Then with her trembling hands she covered it,
And stole away as softly as she came.
But—for the struggle was beyond her strength—
Turned quickly, dropping down upon her knees
Beside him. But her guest was not asleep.
So he arose at once, and raised her up,
And calmly said, “ I knew thee, my good nurse ;
But in these rags I hoped to see my home ;
And, if my presence were an evil there,
To leave it unobserved. But tell me all.”
Then with suppressed emotion both resumed
Their seats, and thus the widow did relate
Briefly the slow events of many years.

“ Thy dame, Sir Colin, has been true to thee,
Through trials that few women could have borne.
It’s a sore thing, Sir Colin, for a wife
Thus to be left alone, year after year.
I bore it once myself for eighteen months,
And thought it long enough ; but she, poor soul,
She has not known these last five weary years
If she were wife or widow—has not heard,
Save idle rumours, anything of you.
But that is past ; and I have always said

Sir Colin was a faithful-hearted man,
If he were living ——”

“Where is Dugald Dhu,
The same that first went with me to the wars?
And where is Duncan, and young Roderick?
And ——”

“Nay, ask a seer, for how can I describe
The deaths of those who perished far away?
If Duncan ever should return again
His ghost would be more welcome, for his wife
Is wedded to the man he hated most,
And there are bairns to prove it: you yourself,
If a day later, would have found your own
Laid in the arms of Lord Mac Corquadale.”

At this Sir Colin grew as pale as death,
And in a hollow, low, unnatural voice,
Asked calmly, “Is it better I were dead?”
And the nurse answered,—“Never came a ghost
So little welcome to a marriage feast
As thou wilt be to-morrow—save to one,
Thy wife, who, from the love she bore to thee,
Put off the suit of Lord Mac Corquadale
From year to year, and only gave consent
A month ago; and even now they say
That she repents it, and would still defer.
Go to the wedding, thou unwelcome guest,
And watch her unobserved; and, in thy rags,

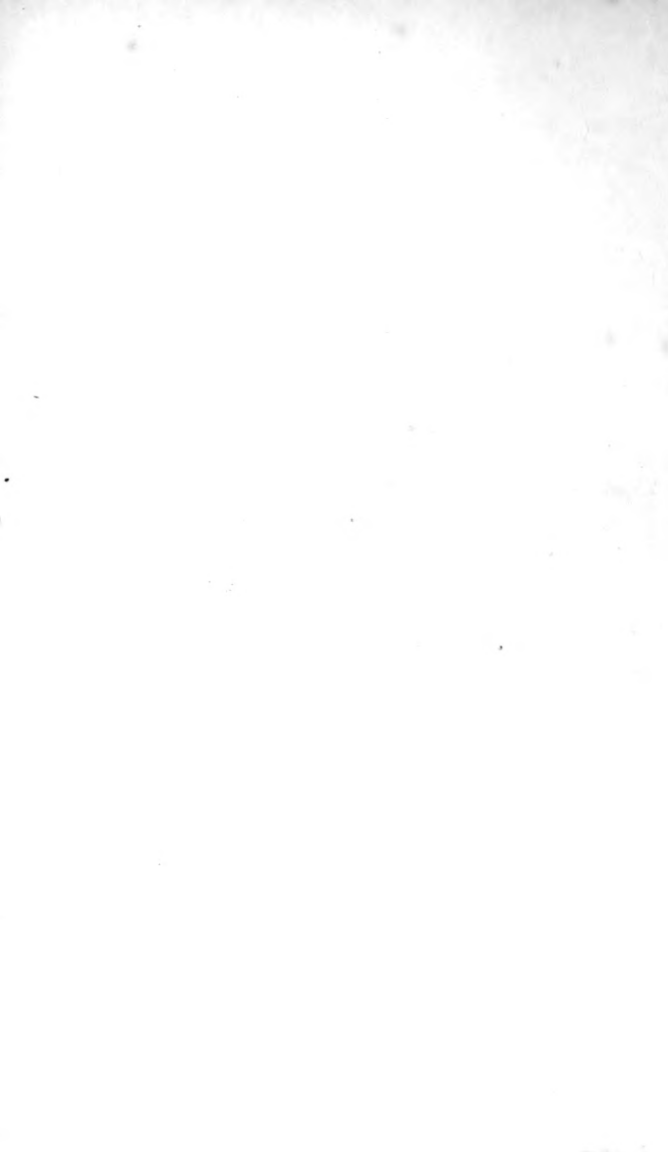
Sit down amongst the clansmen in the hall
Of the new castle which thy dame hath built
Out of her savings in these seven years."

So, in the morning when the clouds were bright
Behind Ben Loy, before the sun was up,
Sir Colin left the hut in beggar's rags,
And the poor widow watched him from the door.

His guide made gentle music all the way,
Playing before him as a piper plays
Before a chieftain coming from the wars
To his own castle, flushed with late success.
His guide, the river Orchay, led him on
Down a most lovely valley. From the hills
White bridal veils of mist were lifted up
By the gay sun, who kissed them till they blushed
With light and joy. The golden river flowed
Deep on one side along the steepest bank ;
But, on the other, shallowed till its bed
Lay in long shapely mounds, contrasting well
Millions of pebbles, smooth, and white, and dry
With the dark, quiet waters. Joyously
Nine miles the river led him, reach by reach,
Until before him rose that hollowed hill
Which with five peaks a hollow half surrounds,
Wherein the rain-clouds hang on stormy days,
And the low sunbeams slant at eventide.

The chief looked on the hills and recognised
Their old familiar outlines. Three miles more
He held along the Orchay's southern bank,
Then saw Kilchurn, his castle, founded on
A rocky isle, so low upon the lake,
That, as its outlines changed on his approach,
It almost seemed to float insensibly,
Like a great ship at anchor. There it stood ;
And in it—but Sir Colin crushed the thought—
A wife whose faith, however patient once,
Was now exhausted, waited as a bride
For a new bridegroom on her marriage morn.
Yes, there it stood, the castle that she built
Out of her savings in the seven years
Of his long absence : gaily bright it was ;
The higher courses of the finished keep
Were white and new ; but darker weather-stains
About the lowest story did record
The patience of that good dame Margaret.
Sir Colin saw the thoughtfulness of love ;
And if he ever blamed her in his heart
For giving credence to the false report
Of his decease, on any trivial ground,
He then forgave her, saying to himself,—
“ This she intended as a pleasant gift
To me on my return—a kind surprise ;
She thought to show me all her thriftiness





In this fair castle, and to welcome me
Lord of the strongest keep upon Loch Awe."

Then hastened he, for from the castled isle
Came bursts of highland music, wild and free,
That echoed in the gorges of the hills.
And as Sir Colin crossed the natural moat
By a great drawbridge, on its wooden planks
A charger's foot fell heavily behind,
And, looking back, he saw Mac Corquadale
Clad as a bridegroom coming for his bride.

Sir Colin entered, as a mendicant
In humble garb, his castle of Kilchurn;
Looked on the feast awhile, then, in his rags,
Sat down amongst the clansmen in the hall
Of the new castle, which his dame had built
Out of her savings in those seven years.
Cup after cup they drank. Then to the dais
Came a young Chief, who waved his hand for silence,
And said, "Brave Campbells, and you friendly guests,
Who here enjoy our hospitality,
Before you drink the bride, it is her wish
That in deep silence you should testify
The love you bore the chieftain we have lost."
Sadly he spoke. The clansmen in the hall
Rose gravely, all the uproar of the feast
Hushed to a solemn silence, and they raised

Their cups on high, and to the memory
Of their lost chieftain drained a mournful draught—
All but the beggar. In his rags apart
He still sat playing with his empty cup.
And when the clansmen saw it, one by one
They looked at him and frowned; and one old man,
Whose master knew his faithful face again,
Though he knew not his master, said to him,—
“Knowst thou whose pious wish thou hast refused?
That was our chieftain’s son:” but all the rest
Frowned on the beggar. Then Sir Colin said,—
And as he spoke he cleared his husky voice
With frequent hems, for he was deeply moved,—
“I knew Sir Colin in a foreign land,
But will not drink unto his memory
Until his widow fills this empty cup.”
Then through the hall passed his own Margaret,
And the retainer, whom Sir Colin told
That he had known Sir Colin, asked of her
A favour for a guest who would not drink
Unless the bride would fill his empty cup;
For so he hoped to loose his neighbour’s tongue,
And hear some news of his beloved chief.
And she in kindness pardoned the request,
Acceding, and the beggar drained the cup,
And fixed his eyes upon her. Still the same
She stood before him. In her seven years
Of watching, her young beauty had matured

Into sad ripeness, pale and worn, perhaps,
But sweetly pious, full of patient love.
Then to her hand the guest returned the cup,
And in the bottom, in the lees of wine,
There lay a signet-ring of massive gold,
Like a great waif of shipwreck which is seen
Above a shallow pool upon the sands
Of the deep ocean when the tide is low.

Then from the ring—a waif from the wrecked ship
Of her lost hope—a wild, bewildered glance
She turned upon the beggar, and he rose
Unto his lordly stature, and his rags
Were scant to hide the chieftain's noble frame.
And in an instant, with a cry of joy,
The bride, escaping from the bridegroom's arm,
Fell sobbing wildly on the beggar's breast.
Then the grey clansman, who reproved his chief,
Cried out,—“ Sir Colin has returned again !”
And round the board it passed, from mouth to mouth,
“ Sir Colin has come home !” A deafening shout
Rose in the hall, and in the crowded court
The people answered when they knew the cause ;
And then, above the din, the pipers played
The Gathering of the Campbells.

But meanwhile

Sir Colin and his dame had left the hall,—
She almost senseless, pale, and stupified,

Laughing and sobbing incoherently,
Excited by the violence of joy
And strong revulsions of a sensitive heart.
But ere the false Mac Corquadale could go
Young Duncan rushed towards him, and the crowd
Made a clear way—he was the chieftain's heir,
And they were hot for vengeance; but he said,—
“ You must have slain my father's messengers,
And spread abroad false rumours of his fate ;
But, seeing you have eaten of our salt,
Farewell, my lord,—we will not quarrel now,
That wedding garb must not be soiled with blood ;
Keep it for some occasion, when I hope
Your love will be more prosperous.”

He laughed :

Too happy in the sweetness of that hour
To think of vengeance, and his generous heart
Felt for the would-be bridegroom, standing there
The fool of fortune that defeated him ;
And all the clansmen caught this pleasant mood,
And peals of laughter followed the retreat
Of the derided, disappointed lord,
And all night long the castle rang with glee.
But in a little chamber, far apart,
Sir Colin folded his rewarded wife
Unto his breast. She died in after years,
When her brave son avenged her cruel wrong,
And slew in battle Lord Mac Corquadale,

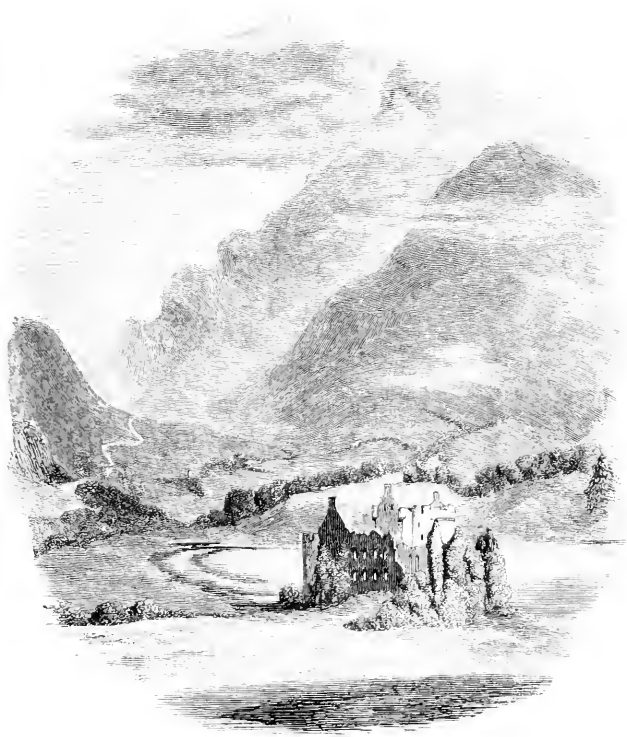
And took his land, his castle, and his goods ;
And ever since have his descendants been
A broken clan without inheritance.

An antiquarian friend, with whom I crossed
The sandy delta which has made the isle
Peninsular, drew out upon the sand
A ground-plan of the castle. “There’s the keep,
Into whose lowest story, arched for strength,
The herds were driven when marauders came.
This is the curtain, these the angle towers,
And this the court. They lived in homely style,
For they were poorer than our Southern lords,
Whose princely households all these barren hills
Would not maintain. They lived in homely style—
Great cattle-stealers—none the worse for that ;
For cattle-stealing was a noble game
In these wild highlands then, and would draw out
Heroic virtues. We must measure men
According to the notions of their time.”

There is a level plain of yellow sand,
With many a straggling bush and tuft of grass
About the castled rock. The sand is streaked
With lines of red and ribbed by stormy waves,
And in this desert stand the lonely towers
Of old Kilehurn. To see the ruin well,
Row down the Orchay to the Goose’s Rock ;

And as the river winds the outlines change,
The background shifting also, till at last,
When you ascend the rock on the north shore,
The castle rests beneath you, and behind it
An inlet of the loch, and sweetly green
Beyond the glittering inlet, swelling knowes
With fir plantations stretching far away ;
And up Glen Orchay, past a village tower,
That gleams amongst dark trees as white as marble,
The view extends, until across the foot
Of a great mountain winds the highland road ;
And, towering to the clouds, the shapely heap
Of rough Ben Loy grows pale with passing showers,
And spots of sunshine wander here and there,
Warm on the blue of its cold solitudes.

'This is Sir Walter's pile of Ardenvohr,¹⁶
Changed since Dalgetty criticised its strength.
Within the keep the floors are all removed,
And in the corkscrew staircase you may stand
And look above, and see a disc of blue,
And fragments of the steps still sticking out,
Wilfully broken. The court is overgrown
With trees that wave in full maturity.
Masses of wall lie as they fell at first,
Unshattered, for the mortar binds the stones.
At one of the four angles of the pile
There towers a bush of greenery. Through the holes





Pierced in the wall, to light the garrison
Which kept the stronghold in the civil war,
The sun shines brightly — shines — but *from within*.
Frost widens all the fissures every year ;
Yet still the people say a voice is heard
Above the wailing of the winter storms,
Saying, that never shall the castle fall
Which love and patience built in seven years,
Until the sea submerges Cruachan !

ON a turret of the keep,
On the castled isle,
Where the poet lies asleep,
Circled by the waters deep,
Happy planets smile.

Yes, he sleeps there all alone
In a little cell,
Vaulted with an arch of stone,
In a turret ivy-grown,
Where an owl doth dwell.

Yet he only sleeps by fits,
For loudly snores the owl —
“ Alone, and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the ” ivy sits :
He is a noisy fowl !

V.

ARDHONNEL.

“THESE mountains grow oppressive. I will row Southwards for sylvan beauty and the peace Of those serene and calmly-sleeping hills, Whose outlines on the far horizon lie Like clouds at sunset.” So we took the boat, I and a Highland boatman, each an oar, And through the waters, rippling to prolong The green reflections, swiftly pulled away. Then first I saw the bulk of Cruachan, When all the peaks, that guard its hollow gorge, Came from behind Ben Vorich, one by one. That gorge was blue and deep, for shadows fell Into its fearful gulf from snowy clouds That rose like alps above the highest peak. But one great muscular shoulder, in the sun, Shone green and lustrous, wet with recent rain, Against the dark blue corrie. In the east,

Ben Loy and his great brethren, far away,
Lay like a herd of monstrous elephants
Scattered in every attitude of rest,
And on their bodies stood the wingèd clouds,
Folding their silver wings familiarly.
Then on our oars we rested, and the boat
Insensibly swung round, and thirty peaks
Passed in review before me, and the plain
Of silver waters stretched unto their feet.

Far northwards, where the lake is lost in hills,
The two Black Islands lie with doubled forms,
And if they were not there you would not know
That it was water.

We have lost them now :

A promontory, wooded to the foot,
Has interposed and hidden them from us.

I watch slow changes on the distant shores,—
As Science notes the parallax of stars
Through which Earth floats, more swiftly than we think.

This is a land of rain, for we have been
Wet through and dried again like water-dogs,
Three times already, and another shower
Comes northward with the wind.

Behind that cape

Lies Inish Erreth, and the four-square keep

Of Old Argyle.

Ardhonnell looms in sight :

A grey, tall fortress, on a wooded isle,
Not buried but adorned by foliage.

And now I see another reach of lake.

We landed at Ardhonnell when the sun
Shone brightly, and the air was purified,
Washed by the rain. The rock is sharp and steep ;
And in the four great walls there is no breach ;
And three are built of close-wrought masonry.
Without a single crevice, so compact,
That, save some loopholes in the higher courses,
Those stones would cage an Afrit. In the fourth
I found a door—the only entrance door—
And through tall nettles, over heaps of stones,
Stumbled along. Some gaunt partition-walls,
Left standing, gave an evidence of floors ;
And in the great, square, corner buttresses,
Arched doorways, storied one above another,
Gave a precarious entrance to small cells,
Each with a single loophole, and a roof
Of solid stone arched over it for strength.

Standing in one of these strange bedchambers,
My Highlander looked round him and observed
How narrow and confined it was : he said

“He should not like to sleep there”—so I laughed,
Saying, “I used a garret at a push,
When at Dalmally, quite as small as this;
And if there’s not a bedroom at the inn,
I would not care to sleep here by myself,
This very night.” Then that stout Highlandman,
In sheer amazement opened both his eyes,
Swearing “he would not sleep there for five pounds.”

The bedrooms in the inn were occupied:
“Dugald,” said I, “get half a sack of peat,
And, after sunset, bring it in the boat—
I’m going to sketch the castle from the shore—
And you will see me, and will take me in,
And row me to Ardhonnel. I shall sleep
In that small chamber, and shall want a fire—
The room has not been used, I think, of late,
And may want airing.” Dugald laughed aloud,
To prove how smartly he could take a joke:
I was in earnest. When convinced at last,
He grew quite grave; and in this altered mood
I left him, wondering what strange phantasy,
Or terrible distemper of the brain,
Had seized upon me, that I dared to seek
The haunts of owls and bats—and, it might be,
Of beings worse than either owls or bats—
Through the long hours of darkness, and alone.

The level light, across the rugged sides
Of Cruachan, cast airy multitudes
Of pale blue shadows, and the hollow gorge
Was one flat void of blue, from which the peaks
Rose to the light. It left them, and a cloud
Nestled in that huge corrie for the night.
Gazing on this, I sat upon the beach
Near Inish Connel, where the castle is ;
And when the sun was down I heard a noise
Of rowing, and the dip of distant oars,
Coming towards me. When she hove in sight
I knew the boat, and, rising from her prow,
Saw a blue wreath of light and graceful smoke,
That seemed as much at home upon the lake
As if ascending from a cottage hearth.
Dugald had brought a pan of burning peat,
Which served us for the nucleus of a fire,
And soon my turret cell was full of smoke,
Which, after rambling over every wall,
Seeking a chimney vainly, found its way
Out by the door through which we clambered in.

I stood alone upon the parapet
When the first stars came out, and then, indeed,
I felt that keen sensation of delight,
Which is the well and fount of poesy,
Moving within me and collecting force.
Such moments have been rare with me of late,

For as I grow to manhood it becomes
More difficult to yield the spirit up
To outward influence, and reflection grows
Habitual ; so I cannot be alone —
I cannot banish all the world of men,
Those whom I know, or have known, in the world,
Even if I would—they throng these solitudes.
But in that silent hour I felt once more
The thrilling sense of being quite alone
With Nature in her beauty. Interviews
With earthly sovereigns in their privacy
Honour the subject, but to one who feels
God's presence most in lovely solitudes,
Whether he be a prophet—as of old
Such men were called—or poet writing verse,
Or silent poet writing none at all,
Or honest painter—loneliness to him
May be the very time when he receives
Knowledge in most abundance.

As I stood

Leaning upon the broken battlement,
And watched the twilight deepen on the hills,
My soul became as calm as that calm lake,
Reflecting all things—for the troubled breast
Confuses all the images of things,
As stormy waves receive a colouring
From clouds and hills, but lose all trace of form.
And, as it calms, the heart grows sensitive

To all surrounding objects, and receives
True and distinct impressions.

Far away

Grey mountains lay like clouds on the horizon,
But, opposite, a range of sombre brown
Rose from the other shore—a perfect void
Of darkness, all enclosed by two rough lines,—
The one, the mountainous outline on the sky,
The other, its reflection. I could see,
As though they hung ten thousand feet below,
The images of clouds; but when I looked
Up to the clouds themselves my eye became
Aware of stars beyond, and turning round
I saw a planet burning in the south,
Eclipsed a moment by a silent wing.
It was a large white owl that came between;
It flew beneath me, passing many times,
And once it settled, for an instant only,
Upon a crumbling fragment of the wall,
And gazed upon me with its two black eyes,
Set in a white round face like the full moon.

I sought my turret chamber. Though the walls
Were built of rude unchiselled masonry,
And though there was no chimney for the fire,
Or door or glazing to keep out the cold,
It had an air of comfort, for the peat
Burnt brightly through the atmosphere of smoke;

Besides, there was some furniture,—my trunk,
A cloak spread on the pavement for a bed,
A sack of peat, and a brass candlestick
For ornament, not use, since I attached
The candle to the wall as workmen do.
So that the place looked cheerful when I laid
My weary limbs upon a harder bed
Than tourists often use, and closed my eyes,
Already sore and watery with the smoke.

I know that this is dull and commonplace,
Dear reader, but the spirits of Loch Awe
That night, perhaps, were otherwise engaged ;
And I know naught of rapping ; and, besides,
There was no table—not a single board—
So I was doomed to spend the night alone.
Though poets conjure phantoms from the deeps
Of their creative fancy, the sound head
Is master of its own imaginings ;
And if the ghosts I summon from their graves
Grew troublesome, or caused unpleasant thoughts,
Reason, that stern exorcist, would compel
Their instant flight. So, to amuse myself,
I pictured ghosts of many feudal chiefs
Entering the little chamber one by one,
Clad as in life, with targe, and dirk, and sword ;
Pale faces frowning, through the haze of smoke,
Upon the rash intruder, and contempt

On their white bloodless lips for one who sought
The comforts they despised, whose beds had been
The heather on the rock, and one of whom
Had been contemned, and thought effeminate,
Because he shaped a pillow of the snow
Of which his bed was made.

I fell asleep,

And in a dreamless and unbroken rest
These fancies died away. When I awoke
Some low, red embers scattered on the floor,
And a short candle with a knob of snuff,
Shed a dim light upon the rough old walls ;
So I collected all the hottest peats
Into a heap, and their united warmth,
When nursed and coaxed, became a second fire.
Then I descended very cautiously
Into the castle hall, and walking past
Black archways towards the fireplace of the hall,
A wide, low arch, I thought how all was changed
Since round that yawning fireplace, and within
The little loopholed chamber that it made,
The jovial clansmen revelled.

Once again

I stood upon the ivied parapet.
The night was very beautiful and calm ;
There was no sound upon the little isle,
Except the snoring of my friend the owl,
And the faint ripple of the drowsy water

Against the rocky beach, far down below.
Then came a noise of distant waterfalls
From both the shores, and it was strange to hear
Two housedogs bay across the breadth of lake,
Answering each other. I have never seen
More lovely starlight. Three great planets shone
North, south, and west, and on the deep, dark waters,
Their light fell softly toward the castled isle.
The water seemed quite luminous itself
Beneath those planets, and the ripple gave
Quick diamond flashes of a transient light,
Most like the phosphorescence of the sea.

Again I dozed, and near me snored the owl
In the thick ivy, with a human tone ;
A sonorous snore it was, and very loud.
There was a flock of rooks upon the isle,
But, after quarrelling till they fell asleep,
They had been still as mice. A noisy bat
Came in to see me often, fluttering round
The little chamber on its skinny wings,
Then darting through the loophole or the door
Into the night. A giant spider ran
Across me—and as little did he dream
Of what he trod on, as we human insects
Think of the star we trample underfoot.
These were my only visitors. Perhaps
Some would have shrunk from their society,

But I have pleasure in all living things ;
Which in their place are serving the Supreme ;
And they discharge their functions in this world
More perfectly than I. The happiness
Of living in unconscious harmony
With Nature is so little known to man,
That one may almost envy bats and owls
Their simpler duties, and the perfect ease
With which they serve the universal Law.
We wretches, with a thousand hostile creeds,
Perplexed and baffled in the endless search,
What are we more than they ? Have we attained
More virtue than those lilies of the field,
Which, clothed in beauty, know not that they live ?
Have we more faith than spiders, bats, and owls,
Who live in trust ?

These thoughts passed through my mind
As I lay thinking in that ruined tower.
But after them the answer also came.

One conscious effort to obey the right
Is worth a thousand years of sinless life—
Sinless because it knows not how to sin.
These creatures have not misery and vice,
Nor have they virtue, and what virtue brings.
A corpse obeys the law as well as they :
It decomposes, and its gases fly
Where Nature wills. In such obedience

There is no virtue, neither any praise.
A child who bears affliction patiently
Does more than ever the eternal hills
Have done in all the ages of the past—
Their million years of death ! So let us learn
The glory, for we *know* the pain of choice ;
And let us make our lives, though sorrowful
And very bitter, like heroic lives !
In effort lies our glory and our pain ;
But the time comes when that will also cease,
And we shall rest, yet in our rest obey
Eternal law, as the heart beats in sleep.

I also envied thoughtlessly the power
Of bearing rude assaults of wind and weather
Without protection, which these creatures have ;
But soon remembered that a creature's rank
Is chiefly marked by the necessity
Of many outward agents to its life,
And therefore to itself the power is given
To modify and change surrounding things ;
And when this power has reached a certain point
In man himself, we call him civilised.

Here is another picture from the walls.
The moon had risen, and her quiet light
Fell softly on the castle and the hills ;
Not with the sharp, strong shadows, which she throws

On the cold earth in winter, when the air
Is clear and sharp with frost, but all around
A sort of paler sunlight, warm and dim,
Made grey the solemn shadows of the keep,
A feeble yet most penetrative light !

Another hour of interrupted sleep.
When I awoke 't was in a dreary place.
My candle having melted from the wall
Was flickering in the dust. The fire was black,
And straggling rays of very cheerless light
Entered the cell—the first cold rays of dawn.

Yes, it was daylight. On the grassy walls
Once more I stood, and watched the infinite change.
The lake was now all rippled, white, and cold,
With streaks of darkest water, smooth as glass ;
But that cold ripple flushed with rose colour
When in the east, long fields of airy cloud
Coloured ; and in the regions of the north,
The undefined pale vapours of the sky
Began to feel the sun. Then on sharp peaks
Of Alpine cloud above Ben Cruachan
Touches of light fell westward, and thick clouds,
Opaque and leaden-hued, that heavily
Hung in the yellow east, received quick strokes
Of gold and crimson on their under edge,
Defining forms indefinite before.

Then I descended to the water's edge,
And saw the boat which brought the prisoner
His order of release. We left the isle ;
And in a clear, deep bay, as cold as ice,
I broke the still reflections with a plunge,
And washed away the odour of the peat.¹⁷

A RUINED church, whose broken walls
Crown the isle where dead men lie,
Low and open to the sky,
When the rain of winter falls
They cannot keep its pavement dry.

Underneath tall weeds and rank,
Lie the dead in quiet sleep,
Circled by the stormy deep,
Where a mighty swimmer sank,
Leaving one alone to weep,

On this island long ago,
Ere the ancient church was built,
Victim of a traitor's guilt,
Causing innocent blood to flow—
Blood most innocently spilt !

VI.

INISH ERRETH.

NEAR to Ardhoneel Inish Erreth lies,
 Close to the shore. A little ruined church,
 And a few tombstones on a barren mound,
 All its attractions ; but a Celtic tale,
 Antique as any legend of Loch Awe,
 Has for its scene that common heap of earth.¹²

Armar and Daura had exchanged the vows
 Of lovers when the snow was on the ground ;
 And she was waiting in her father's house
 For him she loved to come and claim his bride.
 But Erreth hated Armarm, who had slain
 His brother in the freshness of his youth.
 So Erreth came to Daura in disguise,
 Dressed as a vassal of her future spouse,
 And said, " My boat is ready on the beach,
 For Armarm sent me hither. I have come

To take you to an island on the lake,
Where he lies wounded by an antlered stag.
I slew the stag, and wrapped him in the skin ;
And there he lies upon the frozen snow.”

The sun was low before they reached the isle ;
And in the frosty air the distant peaks
Of Cruachan rose sharp, and white, and clear
Against a clear white sky. The sun went down,
And Inish Erreth and its neighbour isle
Lay on the water — barren solitudes,
Ages before the castle and the church
Were built by feudal power and piety.

Poor Daura sat alone in that canoe
With the stern man whose brother Armar killed —
Revengeful Erreth. She was in his power.
But love had banished all her maiden fear ;
She only thought of Armar. All she asked
Was of his wound, and whether the warm skin,
Flayed from the reeking body of the stag,
Would keep him from the biting of the frost.
But when they neared the isle she raised her voice,
And called aloud for Armar ; her lorn cries,
Anxious as those of some forsaken plover,
That calls in vain across the darkling moor,
Returning after every fruitless search
In dreary echoes. “ He has gone to sleep,”

Said Erreth ; but poor Daura shook her head :
And Erreth turned the stern towards the isle,
And ran it up, and Daura went ashore.
But Erreth did not follow. His canoe
Rounded the isle, and in a little bay
(Which now, when calm, reflects the whitewashed front
Of a neat inn, but in those early times
Was bordered by a forest of wild oaks)
The traitor landed.

Then his victim found
To what a cruel snare she was betrayed ;
For though she rambled over all the isle
Like one distracted, calling for her love,
None answered—there was none to answer there.
Alone upon a bare and barren isle,
Treading the crisp turf on its highest ridge,
Or the hard frozen snow that lay in drifts
Along its southern side, she looked above
For help, but there the cold stars heeded not.
Yet Erreth's boat lay on the opposite shore,
So near that she could watch it as it rocked,
And hear the water rippling on its bows.
And still there was no help. If she could reach
That boat—that shore—her life might yet be saved.
But though the channel in the summer drought
Was but breast high, the autumn had been wet ;
And the long rains that fell for many weeks
Before the frost set in had filled the loch.

Besides, there rushed a current through the strait ;
And, tearing past the jagged belt of ice
That fringed the island, breakers dashed in spray.
It was a cheerless isle. The rock and turf
Were hard and bleak, the wind had blown them bare,
And on the sheltered side the frozen drifts,
With all their beautiful lines and sculptured forms,
Looked cold and cheerless as a winding sheet
Upon the perished limbs of loveliness.

Meanwhile stern Erreth wandered through the wood,
Cracking the withered boughs beneath his feet,
And pleased with his successful stratagem ;
When strong Arindal in his very path
Stood like a mighty shadow in the gloom
Of the dark forest. Erreth turned aside ;
But Daura's brother fronted him again,
Laden with sylvan spoil, a royal stag.
He had five hounds behind him ; and the two
Were mortal foes, and there was no escape.
Then Erreth quailed, because his conscience smote
His traitor heart. Arindal bound him there
To a strong oak, with thongs of red deer's hide ;
And the five dogs stood by and angrily
Growled when poor Erreth struggled with his foe.

Now Armar went to visit his betrothed,
And her old father met him at the door,

And asked him of his wound, and how he came
Without his daughter. Armar answered him :
“ Good sir, I am not wounded,” and passed on
Into the hall to seek for his betrothed,
For the old man was doting, as he thought.
But there the vassals soon explained it all,
Saying, “ There came a man three hours ago,
Dressed like your vassals, and he came in haste,
And said that you had charged a stag at bay,
And from its horn received a frightful wound ;
And that he slew the stag and flayed it there,
And having swathed you in the reeking hide,
Left you upon an island in the loch
Safe from all harm ; and that you wished to see
Our gentle lady, sir, before you died.
So hearing this, she went away with him
Distracted, and we have not seen her since.”

Then Armar answered with a hollow voice,
Full of emotion, “ She has been betrayed.
Tell me the aspect of the man who came ——”
“ His face was small, and on his upper lip
The hair was pale and scanty ; but his chin
Had a stiff beard about six inches long,
That wagged about before him as he spoke ;
His eye was grey and small, but very keen ;
His motions quick ——” “ No more, I know him now ;
It was the brother of a chief I slew, —

Erreth, the brother of a chief in Lorn,
Whom I cut down in fair and open fight :
But this revenge is cowardly and base.”
He checked himself ; and whilst her father raved,
Daura's betrothed took his authority,
And said, “ There is an island by the shore,
Close to the land ; so I will hasten thither,
And swim across the channel to the isle ;
But you must bring a boat to our relief.
Quick—quick ! the frost is killing even now
Your gentle mistress—'t is a frightful death !”
Then from the hall he ran along the shore,
Swiftly as any deer before the hounds,
Leaping the frozen brooks ; and after him
The strong old chief ran lightly as a youth.
The north wind met them, and they saw the loch
Spotted with foam, for it was blowing hard.

At last they neared the island. When they came
Down to the shore they saw a light canoe
Crossing the channel, and the chieftain said
To Armar, “ That must be the very boat
That Erreth brought ; that figure must be his,
Halfway across.” And Armar strung his bow ;
And ere the figure which they dimly saw
Could reach the island, to his naked breast
The arrow flew. The oars dropped instantly.
Backward the rower fell into the boat.

The prow made no resistance to the waves ;
It turned, and down the current passively
Floated, and bore its burden far away,
Past the low island out into the loch ;
And five great deerhounds howled along the shore.

Daura was standing on the icy beach,
For all her hope was in Arindal's boat ;
And when she saw the oars drop from his grasp,
And him struck down, and the expected prow
Turn from the island suddenly, and yield
To the fierce current, she sank hopelessly
On the cold snow, for all her strength was gone.
Then swiftly past her glided that canoc
With its dead burden out into the loch ;
And Armar, thinking he had slain his foe,
Called joyously to her, and she replied
With a low groan, for all her strength was gone.
Then Armar, glad to find her still alive,
Threw down his bow and leapt into the waves ;
And her old father's voice came cheerfully,
Telling his daughter "not to yield to sleep,
But keep herself awake till she was saved,"
For he had often been upon the hills
And felt, but shaken off, that drowsiness
Which ends in sleep from which no sleeper wakes.

Then Armar shrieked, for though his limbs were strong,

And he a mighty swimmer, he was seized
By that fierce foe, the dreaded, cruel Cramp,
Which dwells in chilly waters down below,
And when the upper waves are icy cold,
Rises above like some ferocious shark
To seize the limbs of men, and drag them down,
And feed on their drowned bodies in the deep.

The current rushed as swiftly as before,
And bore the corse of Armar far away
After Arindal, out into the loch.

When the old chief could see his head no more
Above the waves, he felt that he was lost ;
But talked to Daura incoherently
To keep her wakeful, and the current boiled
Between the dying lady and her sire.

The boat came up at last. The long delay
Was caused by ceaseless struggles with the wind—
The cold north wind that came from Cruachan,
Whose peaks were dark against the crimson glow
Of streamers in the sky. Arindal's boat
Had met them, and they stopped it on its way ;
But when they found his body lying there,
Pierced with an arrow, they had taken it
Into their own, and let the other drift.
And by Arindal's side they shortly laid

His sister's body, blue and stiff with cold,
Frozen to death ; and, chafing both her hands,
The poor old chief sat silently and wept.

A fortnight after, coming through the woods,
A hunter saw a figure white with snow
Leaning against the trunk of a young oak,
And clasping it behind him with his hands.
On going nearer—lo, it was a corpse !
A stiff, cold corpse ; and from its naked limbs
Below the kilt the flesh was gnawn away
By foxes ; and its eyes were eaten out
By a black raven, which the hunter scared.
The wrists were bound with thongs of red deer's hide
Behind the tree—the thongs had cut the flesh.
*The face was small, and on the upper lip
The hair was pale and scanty ; but the chin
Had a stiff beard about six inches long,
Matted and frozen. It was Erreth's beard.*

I LEFT the islands in the night,
 Made dim with rain that fell between,
And now they sleep in wintry white;
 I saw them in their summer green.

The isles are rooted in the earth—
 Storms cannot stir them in their sleep—
But men are moving from their birth,
 Like wild birds tossed upon the deep.

And yet upon the firmest land,
 And in the mighty mountain range
We read, and dimly understand
 The record of eternal change.

VII.

CONCLUSION.

LAST night I saw the gloom upon the loch
 Long after sunset. I had pulled across
 To see a waterfall on Cruachan,
 And, looking westward down the Pass of Awe,
 The fringe of rainy cloud was lifted up,
 And from a golden distance full of light
 The waves received its splendour, brightening
 As the veiled sun approached the edge of cloud,
 Then glittering with a restless, dazzling sheen,
 When he appeared. The mist on the green side
 Of Cruachan, before invisible,
 Received a sunbeam slanting on the copse.

Beyond Glen Strac the open sky appears
 Of delicate pearly green, with distant clouds
 Gleaming afar like hills of yellow gold.
 But nearer masses from the stormy west





Come brooding low and dark above the loch,
Which grows as black as ink at their approach—
Great lurid masses moving inwardly,
Changing like mighty spirits which assume
New forms at their own pleasure. Like a roof
One spreads above me, and descending low
Beneath it hang great pendants. In the East
The clouds wear awful shapes of dusky gold,—
Vast tawny giants moving heavily
To meet approaching night.

The sun is down :

There is one crimson stain on the cold cloud,
Whose ashy mounds are heaped on Cruachan ;
And in the west the low, long, purple hills,
Are parted by a line of orange sky
From the dull clouds above them.

Then I saw

A lonely beach before me, canopied
With the deep fringe of foliage that descends
Down to the mountain's foot, and thereupon
I landed, walking on the quiet lane,
A mile or two, until I crossed a bridge
That spans a torrent. There I turned aside
Into the tangled copsewood, clambering
Through the wet fern and up the slippery rock
Until I reached the point I wished to gain.
Then it was twilight, and I heard below
The water tumbling in a dark ravine,

And, standing on the cliff's extremest verge,
Beheld a white, unchanging waterfall
In the black depth.¹⁹

The road was very dark

As I returned, and the fantastic rocks,
Shrouded in ghastly lichen, from the gloom
Of the impenetrable underwood,
Heaved up and scowled upon me as I passed,
Where Wallace chased Mac Fadyen, and the Bruce
With his small force defeated John of Lorn,
And drove him to his galleys on the lake.²⁰
Far off, the opposite shore of the broad loch
Lay like a mighty cloudland in the south,
And nearer the dark isles. Towards Inishail
I rowed, and then the rain began to fall
And the grey twilight deepened on the hills.
As I approached the shallows that divide
The Black Isles from the shore of Inishail,
Ben Vorich grew more cloudy and more vast ;
And as I skimmed the smooth and sheltered strait
The ruin of the church amongst the tombs
Reared its dark broken masses on the mound
Against the mountain. On my right and left
There was no land in sight, but barren water,
Wrinkled with rain, met the low-hanging clouds
Like a great ocean in the dreary night,
When at the stern I left the lonely isles.

To simple minds who in the golden age
Of ignorance—the Paradise of fools—
Dwell childlike, the material universe
Is easy of solution. Unperplexed
By questions such as only can occur
To knowledge seeking knowledge, they explain
Existing facts by legends plausibly.
This is the use of myth—to set at rest
Whatever thoughts might otherwise disturb
The sweet repose of men half infantine,
Who in the earlier ages of the world
Lived amongst dreams, the children of the race.
So to the Celtic lakesmen long ago
The myth of Bera was a nurse's tale
To children over-curious. It sufficed
For them, but not for us ; who having grown
To riper age, are scarcely satisfied
With what our kind old nurses used to say.
And when I told you of the Cailliach Bhe'ir
I felt that I was telling a child's tale
To older ears ; and though one is amused
With stories such as Christian Andersen's,
Composed at first for children—still, you know,
We do not now believe them any more.
Well, let them perish, they have served their turn ;
But, if I thought the Good and Beautiful
Had died with them, my grief would never end :
Oh ! I should weep their loss most bitterly.

I do not think so, and I do not grieve :
My friends, the True is also beautiful ;
The True is also beautiful and good !

The Loch is scarcely younger than the hills,
And they grew slowly.²¹ Twenty thousand years
Might be to them the years of infancy.
Slowly the mighty subterranean fire
Thrust up the porphyry peak of Cruachan !
Ere then the tribute of a hundred streams
Filled the great valley, and the waters found
One outlet only,²² which their force enlarged ;
And those fair Isles which I do consecrate
To be for ever sacred unto song,
Emerged as they subsided — barren rocks,
Glittering with white quartz crystals here and there,
Scattered like spots of snow upon the hills.
But soon upon them spread a covering
Of velvet fibres ; then white spots of lichen
Dotted the dark mould of the former growths ;
And so progressed the vegetable forms,
And the Black Isles, whose noble groves of beech
Cast on the silver surface of the lake
Their green reflections, whose luxuriant plants,
Bright purple heather, sky-blue hyacinth,
And long fine grasses, with a hundred flowers
Scattered amongst them, make the ground so rich
Under the boughs — those sister isles were once

Barren and naked, and the interval
Between the starry lichen and the beech
Was so immense that years and centuries
Fail me.²³ There is an infinite of time,
Before — behind — as infinite as space ;
And we may now anticipate an age,
Distant in days as Sirius in miles,
When all the winding valley of Loch Awe
Shall be a level and alluvial tract,
And my beloved Isles unislanded ;
For all the streams bring heavy loads of sand,
Which either they deposit at their mouths,
(As at Kilchurn, which has been formerly
An island standing at the Orchay's mouth,
Which by a delta joined it to the land,
As Pharos unto Egypt long ago) ;
Or cast into the waters of the lake,
Through which the fine grains slowly settling down
Make it grow shallow.

So in course of time
The Cailliach's fault may be at last retrieved,
When there shall be a dry and fertile plain
Level unto the bases of the hills.

NOTES.

¹ I visited Loch Awe in 1852, making four sketches and a poem on Inishail, of which a few lines are preserved in the present volume. Afterwards, in 1854, I revisited the lake, setting out with the intention of writing 2000 lines about it, and painting a few illustrations of the scenery. The poem as it now stands consists of rather more than 2000 lines, and some of the sketches accompany it as vignettes. A good deal of it was written in my boat or on the islands. I mention these facts to substantiate the accuracy of the descriptions.

² The origin of the tradition is given by Mr. Stewart in his account of the parish of Strachur. Be'ir is the Gaelic for a thunderbolt. In the oblique cases it is Bhe'ir, as Bein Bhe'ir, the mountain of thunder, the name of a very high mountain in Appin. Cailliach Bhe'ir, therefore, was the personification of a thunderbolt, usually accompanied by heavy rains.

³ Cailliach is the Gaelic for old woman. A Highlander took great pains to make me understand the exact significance of the term: we have no precise equivalent for it in English. The descriptions of a mountain torrent which follow were written in my note-book on the moors, after three weeks' incessant rain; they were taken direct from

nature; but on a reperusal of *Modern Painters*, I find a picture of the Falls of Schaffhausen (Sec. v. Chap. II.), which might have served for the original of mine. A precious stone occurred to each of us as the nearest approach to the broken water,—Ruskin thought of the chrysoprase on the banks of the Rhine; the red brown of the Highland torrent suggested the fire-opal.

⁴ I wrote the lines which follow after reading a chapter in Mackay's learned volumes on the *Progress of the Intellect*, treating of the notion of a dying god. I am happy to acknowledge my obligation.

⁵ The island of Fraoch Elan was given by Alexander III. in 1296, to Gilbert Mac Naughten, the chief of his clan, on condition that he should entertain the King of Scotland whenever he passed that way. The proprietor, in 1745, made secret preparations for entertaining *the Prince* in the castle, had he passed in that direction after landing in Glenfinnin.

⁶ No one ever thinks of using a sail on Loch Awe, though Turner chose to hoist one or two, regardless of squalls, in his imaginary "Kilchurn Castle." The drawing was probably done in Queen Anne Street. The Pass is the most prolific source of sudden and violent gusts of wind.

* ⁷ This description is from the life.

⁸ The Black Islands are close to Inishail, at its southern extremity. In natural beauty, both of shape and vegetation, they are the finest on the lake. To glide through the narrow strait on a summer's night and see the moon moving through the trees, and then, when the isles were passed, glittering on the waters, was a favourite amusement of mine.

⁹ Fraoch Elan means the Isle of Heather.

¹⁰ The nuns of Inishail have left behind them a very good reputation. Hay, abbot of Inchaffray, got the tem-

poralities. Inchaffray was afterwards erected into a temporal lordship in his favour.

¹¹ Some of the tombstones have been removed from Inishail. There are several in the churchyard at Dalmally.

¹² The story of Mac Intyre has, at the present day, more popularity amongst the lakesmen than any other tradition of the neighbourhood.

¹³ There is an exquisite passage in Leslie's *Handbook for Young Painters*, "On the Beauty of Death."

¹⁴ The reader will find an account of Sir Colin in the Peerages, art. *Breadalbane*. How much of the legend is positive fact I will not pretend to say. It has probably been shaped into its present very dramatic form by a process (well known to historical critics), by which the mind insensibly rounds the hardest fact into perfect proportions. The current of human thought glides for centuries over the rough events of the past, and when the builder of verse seeks his materials there he will usually find them formed to his hand.

¹⁵ I believe the huts in Skye are the least desirable habitations in our British Archipelago. Those in Glen Orchay are wretched enough. In some instances a natural mound provides one wall—the rest are built of loose stones without mortar. An average house—such as a Highlander would be content with—may be erected for about 5*l*.

¹⁶ Wordsworth has apostrophised Kilchurn, but his poem has nothing characteristic of the place. In the *Legend of Montrose* Sir Walter appears to have observed its defects as a modern military position with great accuracy.

¹⁷ The greater part of this chapter was written in the castle. The descriptions, as usual, are direct from nature; and whatever there is of philosophic digression I have retained as it was originally written, because it would be

out of character to suppose that any imaginative person could be left alone in an old castle with his own thoughts and not ramble a little.

¹⁸ Chambers attaches the story of Erreth to this island, but I do not know on what authority.

¹⁹ This waterfall is on the south side of Ben Cruachan, near the Oban road. The whole stream is singularly picturesque.

²⁰ See the notes to Scott's *Highland Widow*.

²¹ I have adopted Sir Charles Lyell's theory of the slow upheaval of mountain chains in preference to the older view of their sudden emergence.

²² Loch Awe has only one outlet, the river Awe. The rivers Orchay, Cladich, Avich, and innumerable rills, flow into the loch.

²³ The reader of Humboldt will here perceive that I am indebted to his *Views of Nature*.

This book may possibly fall into the hands of tourists in the Highlands ; and if it should induce any one to visit *the Isles of Loch Awe*, a few words on my part may save him a good deal of trouble. The inns are so badly situated that no visitors but sportsmen and painters ever think of staying long at Loch Awe. The hotel at Dalmally is an old inconvenient house, three miles from the loch, and wants rebuilding. The inn at Cladich is a mile from the loch, and the footpath in wet weather is almost impassable. The inn at Port Sonachan and that at Inish Erreth are both close to the water, but so far from Kilchurn that Cladich is perhaps the more eligible as head-quarters. From thence Kilchurn is about five miles ; the river Awe, six ; Inishail, two ; Fraoch Elan, three ; and Ardhoneil, fifteen. Loch Avich is worth seeing, but the boats there are of the tub

species. The best situation for an inn would be the bay of Inish Drynich, the only point where the road comes down to the shore on that side the lake. If some enterprising capitalist would put a little steamer there, the Isles, even including Ardhoneil, might all be visited in the course of a summer afternoon, and a delightful excursion it would be ; but at present, if you go down the loch, you may have to stay there till the wind changes, as there are no roads at the southern extremity.

Though I have only mentioned a few of the islands, there are many more of great beauty scattered here and there—about thirty, I believe, in all. I had included Inish Drynich amongst those in the poem, and allowably so ; for although it is connected with the mainland by an isthmus, the isthmus is often submerged by floods, and, even in the height of summer, so marshy that the inhabitants reach the shore by boating across the exquisite little bay. I had enjoyed the hospitality of the gentleman who then occupied the fishing-lodge on the peninsula, and could not resist the temptation to describe a pleasant evening I spent there when the loch roared on the beach, and the storm-wind,

Howling among the oaks upon the isle,

rivalled our own music in power if not in melody. I have withheld this from publication, for reasons which the reader will readily imagine and appreciate ; he may, however, be permitted to see the lyric and the opening lines :—

The night comes stormily from the west,
 Low-brooding clouds, and wind and rain ;
 Black as ink is the loch's rough breast :
 In the west a crimson stain ;
 And I labour all in vain,

For the storm-waves weary me,
 They are many— I alone.
 'T is a dreary sight to see
 The toppling breakers, one by one,
 Coming from the sunken sun.

Near me is the Druid's isle,
 Where three Ladies of the Lake
 Dwell serenely, and beguile
 The night with music—they will take
 A stranger in for mercy's sake.

That was the lyric, and here are the first few lines of the suppressed chapter :—

The isle of Druids in the prosperous days
 Of their extinct religion—never since
 Has it been left without inhabitants,
 Although the neck of low and marshy land
 Gives no communication with the shore.
 And often when the lake is full of water
 'T is overflowed. A square-built fishing-lodge,
 With a verandah and a gallery
 Round three of its four sides, now occupies
 The holy ground; and there are noble oaks
 Clustering about it, the posterity
 Of those from which the Druids used to cull
 In robes of white, with golden instruments,
 Their parasite—the sacred misletoe;
 Since then held sacred to a sweeter use.

How I was first attracted to this isle
 My journal tells me. From its private page
 I make this extract for the public good.

And then follows a description of a very interesting family of—Scotch terriers. The head of this family was

A noble little dog, on whom I called
 Merely to feast my eyes upon his beauty.
 His owner had a lodge upon Loch Awe,
 Built on a green peninsula; and there
 I found him walking in the pleasant sun,

His dogs around him. "I have come," I said,
 "To make your dog's acquaintance, for his fame
 Has reached the inn at Cladich where I lodge."
 So having briefly introduced myself,
 His owner introduced me to the dog,
 And we were friends at once. He was indeed
 The prince of terriers, of the purest blood,
 With lithe and sinewy frame, and long, round body :
 A mane, too, like a lion's ; and long hair
 Of flaxen texture, reaching to the feet,
 A mingled grey of red, and black, and white,
 Of tints all varied. Then his lustrous eyes,
 And bright, black nose turned upwards to the light,
 Were full of kind expression ; and, in truth,
 I think he understood the compliment
 I paid him, for he welcomed me as though
 He knew quite well my call was on himself.
 We sat and talked an hour away. At last,
 When in his master's boat I left the isle,
 The dog stood gazing from the little pier,
 Wagging a kind farewell.

He had a spouse
 Fairer in colour, but as pure in blood ;
 And three small puppies gambolled round them both,
 The sweetest family group you ever saw.—
 And now, dear reader, one of them is mine.

I am sorry to have to add that the little souvenir of
 the *Isles of Loch Awe* mentioned in the last line, after
 growing exceedingly interesting, died in the distemper.

MACLEAN OF DUART.

UPON the leaded roof of a square keep
There stood a lady looking on the sea.
'T was rippling in the summer afternoon
Beneath the sun, and down the precipice
Below the castle walls the dark grey cliff
Was heated till its crevices were dry ;
While here and there a patch of hardy plants
Glittered on the projections of the rock.
Behind the lady rose the gloomy peaks
Of dreary Mull. Across the broad, blue sound,
The hills of Morven fettered the rough arm
Which old Atlantic thrust there in his youth,
When rudely he caressed that lovely land.
Some rocky islands, scattered far away,
Heaped up their darker masses from the sea
Against the clear air-azure of the hills.
Some of the very loftiest of the clouds

Hung in the purest heights of atmosphere,
Twisted by currents into shapes grotesque.

The lady was dejected by some grief,—
For, looking on the distant peaks of Lorn,
She wept ; and weeping thus upon the keep,
Dropping swift tears from the high battlement,
Her husband found her. Strange, that cruel lord,
Who turned her naked from his loveless bed,
And struck her till she reeled down the cold stair,
Strange that he came with such a friendly smile !

“’Tis a fair scene, my dearest : I have thought
That you might like to see those hills again ;
And as the day is bright they have prepared
The boat, and all is ready.” Then he looked
Into her bloodshot eyes that swam with tears ;
And on her lips a faint incredulous smile
Played when he kissed them.

Downward to the shore
He led her ; and, gallant beyond his wont,
Took her in his strong arms, and boldly stepped
Into the water, wetting his rough legs,
Till the waves soaked the tartan of his kilt.
She found a couch of deerskins in the stern,
And there reclined, her head upon her hand,
With downcast eyes both dropping salty tears
Into the salty waves. They spread the sail ;

The water deepened quickly, and she saw
Forests of weed below, wherein the fish
Like birds in happy groves upon the land
Swam in and out, beneath gigantic leaves
That floated in midwater. Slender stalks,
Leafless and smooth, rose floating to the surface,
Moving with all the water-winds below ;
And on the summit of a sandy knoll
A conger-eel was sleeping 'mid the shells,
Half hid by seaweed. Then the bank grew steep
Until the bottom was no longer seen,
Though still a white shell glimmered in the brown.
When that was gone, the lady lifted up
Her dreamy eyes, and from the rugged shore
Of that detested island she had left
Found that their flight was swifter than she thought.
The water was so calm, she only guessed
The unfelt motion, save when gliding past
The rocky peaks of mountains submarine —
The black and barren tops of sunken reefs,
Which gulls of whitest plumage hid with snow,
And stately herons trod with solemn pace.

When in the middle of that breadth of sea,
Dividing Mull from Morven, the wind fell ;
The sail flapped to the mast ; and though it filled
At times again with little gusts of air,
'T was useless, and the clansmen took the oars,

The chieftain at the helm. Their song was harsh,
In nasal Gaelic ; and the oars kept time,
Dipping into the waves, and rattling loose
In the wide rullocks as they swung them back,
Unlike a skilful rower's feathering blade.
The boatmen pulled with those unbalanced oars,
Till veins and muscles with exertion swelled
On their stout arms. About the sluggish boat
A porpoise, with sleek skin and rounded back,
Crested along its ridge with a broad fin,
Rolled in the water. When the bark approached
A desolate rock, so level that the tide
Replenished all its hollows every day,
They saw a hoary seal not quite submerged,
Swimming with his grey head above the wave,
Gazing on them with melancholy eyes.

Then said Maclean : " My love, the men are tired,
And want to rest ; so let us disembark,
And walk about upon this lonely rock,
Perhaps to gather, since the tide is out,
Beautiful sea-shells." So they left the boat ;
And when the lady said, " The wind is cold,"
Maclean returned to fetch his tartan plaid,—
At least he left her there on that pretence.
The prow reversed, now faced the land of Mull :
That cruel wind, which had been contrary,
Filled the spread sail, and the inclining mast

Dipped the boom end in that white, crisping foam,
Which, as she bounded through the freshening waves,
The little vessel scattered from her bows.
The lady gazed in mute and dim despair,
Seeing but unbelieving—till she heard
A fiendish laugh across the rippling deep ;
And all the hate and cruelty of years
Finished with bitter mockery—"Good night !"

The wretched grow familiar with Death
By constant contemplation, and at last
They welcome him, the Prince of rest and peace.
Thus as the lady paced the narrow bound
Of her bleak rock, she did not weep to think
That she must meet him there ; but summoning up
The resolution born of years of woe,
Smiled on the waves, when lessening in the west
She saw the white sail of her faithless lord
On the dark cliffs of Duart, and the sun
Sank in a cloud behind the purple hills.

The tide was rising eagerly to clasp
Her lovely form—even now it kissed her feet ;
And sighing with impatience of delay,
Kept wildly leaping up the sloping rock.
The night was closing when the cold waves reached
Her trembling knees, and groaning all around,
She saw the gloomy water edged and furred

With a most death-like, phosphorescent light
On its foamed lip, when biting at the stones
Mad with sheer hunger it did rage for her.
Then like a martyr calmly she prepared
Her soul for death, and through the starry heaven
Sang to the Virgin her last vesper hymn.

The stars are shining in the fathomless voids
To which the soul ascends through every rent
In the white, driving clouds. The mountains rise,
Dim as the scenery of a spirit land,
Blank as the hills of Hades, mingling bounds
With vapour banks that rear their Alpine heads,
Till half-way up the zenith their sharp lines
Are clear against the luminous, wind-swept north,
Whose pale green light extinguishes its stars.
The milky way, and all the nebulous groups,
Are clear above the coldest, loftiest clouds ;
Receding such a distance into space,
That though they be a crowd of blazing suns
Each with a complex system, they appear
Films of faint light against the midnight sky.
The water is a blank, mysterious grey,
Without a shore. The hills are dark and huge,
But baseless, and a single ghostly sail
Glimmers against a melancholy isle,
Coasting it slowly with a weary wind.
The upper air is streaked with falling stars ;

And from the rudder in the water cold
Streams out a bubbling, brushlike train of sparks.
The blades are silvery white ; and every stroke
Eddies the sea with little whirling lights,
That sink in their own centres. On the bow
There clings a changeless flake of luminous foam.

It bears a death-like burden. Her wet robe
Is modelled to her limbs, and her brown hair
Wanders amongst a tarry coil of rope
Drenching a folded sail. There is a hand
Beneath her head, another on her heart,
Waiting the stroke of the suspended pulse.
Her brother's ear is close upon her breast ;
He hears a faint, low knock—as if the soul,
Delayed admission at the door of Heaven,
Returned despairing to its former home :
And now between the blanched and parted lips
There slowly comes a painful, gurgling sigh.

Again restored unto her father's house,
She lived and died. A chieftain grey with years
Was stabbed and murdered in the open street.
The avenger was that brother, who had snatched
A sister from the closing arms of Death,
A sacrifice from the altar of the sea !—
The victim was Maclean.

The very rock

Where he exposed his wife may still be seen,
For it emerges when the tide goes down,
And leads for ever an amphibious life.
I passed it once at midnight in a boat.
We had been sailing, but the wind veered round ;
Then at the oars we toiled like galley slaves,
For thirty miles, all down the Sound of Mull ;
And as we moved beneath the midnight stars,
Weary and silent, in my dreamy brain
This poem rose and formed itself at once.

NOTE.

“Among the many ruins studding the cliffs and promontories which fringe the shores of Mull and classic Morven, one was pointed out with which a startling legend is connected, that Joanna Baillie has dramatised with some success—I mean the lonely walls of Duart Castle, overlooking the entrance to the Sound of Mull. It was a stronghold of the Macleans ; and, from the massive ruins of its huge keep, is supposed to have been originally constructed by Northern rovers. Whoever might have been the builder, his successor appears to have had very loose notions of civil law ; and in his proceedings to obtain divorce, his method to effect a connubial separation was not exactly that practised in the Consistorial Court at present. He had married a sister of the Argyle of that day ; and, to settle domestic differences which arose, had recourse to a simple remedy. At low water the lady was placed on an isolated rock which at high water was overflowed, and there left to perish. Fortunately, a passing boat rescued the devoted victim : she was secretly restored to her family ; while, in full assurance of her death, this Highland Bluebeard honoured her with a fictitious funeral. In false security, and a belief that the murder was both committed and unsuspected, the savage chief boldly repaired to the

capital. That visit terminated a ruthless career; for in the street he was stabbed to the heart by Campbell of Calder, a brother of the ill-used lady."—MAXWELL'S *Highlands and Islands of Scotland*.

We left Auchincraig soon after seven, and as the wind was directly against us the men took the oars and myself the helm. Innumerable gulls whitened the rocks which rose above the surface, but deserted them on our approach. Several fine herons flew heavily by. After a four-miles' pull we came under Duart Castle, where I landed. The keep has one wall fourteen feet thick, and the other three twelve feet. The view across the Sound was magnificent. The mountains of the mainland crowded along the shore, stretching their lines from north to south like an army of giants repelling the encroachments of the sea.—*Extract from my own Journal.*

SUNRISE ON BEN LOMOND.

A LITTLE boat was half across the loch
At midnight. I was sitting in the stern
Facing the mountain, which was outlined clear
Against the starry sky. You could not see
Either the line of beach from which it rose,
Or any proof of its retiring peak
Being a mile away. In mystery
We glanced across the water, cleaving fast
Its breast all grey with ripples, and I felt,
Both from their endless stream and chilly sound,
And from the cold embracing of the wind,
Sensations new and mighty. On the land
We rarely think of structure underneath;
But when beneath our seat is liquid cold
A hundred fathoms down, and high above
No roof or cloud between us and the stars,
And mountains sleeping round us, that aspire

So far above the undulating hills
Or southern plains receding into blue,
That they have gained a living influence,
And are no more inanimate : when thus,
Like insects sailing on a floating leaf,
We pass from shore to shore, our fluid path
Becomes a bridge of mystery and awe,
And wonder floats around us.

Gazing still

Up to the milky way and mountain peaks,
Anticipating toil in the ascent,
And lulled to contemplation by the dip,
Frequent and short, of the impatient oars,
I sat half dreaming, till my eyelids fell
Weary of straining upward, and I saw
Close on our path a line of glimmering white,
And soon the keel was scraping on the beach.

The sparry pebbles were so white and dry
They seemed like shells an ocean-tide had left
And, as we walked across them, sparks of fire
Played round our footsteps. Then our toil began :
And through a gloomy wood we felt our way,
From which emerging, up a stair of rocks
We clambered slowly towards a sombre cliff,
Whereon the setting moon appeared to rest.
Another hour, upon a table-land
Of level moor we waded in the heath.

A mile removed still rose the second hill,
Contrasting clearly with the yellowing East,
And mocking by the vastness of its bulk
Our childish labours. Through the marshy flat
We swiftly pushed across the mountain's lap,
And up the steep we climbed. Another step
Thus gained I thought our toil was surely ended ;
And much I dreaded that the royal Sun,
Who waits for no man's pleasure, should appear
Before I was prepared to welcome him.
Beholding, then, the grey rocks of the peak
Distinct and light against the morning sky,
My spirit grew more ardent—as it burns
Even now because its time is running out,
Its dawn of life fast breaking into day—
A day which must not wake me from the sleep
Of idlers in an inn, but on the height
Of watchful duty find me at my post,
Braced with successful labour.

I had reached
The summit, and was standing to receive
The first bright glow of morning on my face,
When from his opening tent of crimson clouds
Came forth the risen Sun ! The stars have shrunk
Into the cold green sky—the moon is gone—
So pass the wandering lights that led my youth !
The lakes are blue and cold in the deep valleys,
And every isle attracts the rising mist.

But now the rugged peaks are flushing red
Before the orb that sternly looks on each,
Peering into the secrets of its face.
Across the lakes the spreading shadows flew,
And I beheld the outline of the peak
On which I stood, as clear on Arthur's side
As you may see the earth's circumference
On the eclipsèd moon. Then brighter grew
The aspect of the scene, and those three lakes
That slept between me and the gorgeous East
Began to feel the presence of the sun.
Bright from a spring half down the precipice
Issued the tiny Forth, whose silver line
Followed a winding course ; and in the south
That white horizon is the Firth of Clyde—
That hill, Dumbarton Rock—and that blue shape,
That almost seems to float among the clouds,
The Isle of Bute. Look down that dark ravine,
And watch the white and swiftly climbing mist
Rolling in silence up the narrow fissure
Between these rugged, black, forbidding rocks,
Like troops of angels climbing fearlessly
Into a dark, and rough, and hardened soul,
Storming its blackened citadel with love !
The peaks around us have already plumed
Their crests with cloud, so let us look once more
And then descend as swiftly as we may,
Lest, blinded by the softly-creeping mist,

We overstep the precipice, or lose
The proper track and die in the morass.

“Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places, and the peak
Of earth-o’ergazing mountains ;” not in vain
We climb the hills, though not to worship there ;
For though we cannot deem the rising sun
More truly noble than those distant stars
Which are his equals, still there is a power
In present vastness which lifts up the mind
From sloth and degradation.

THE POOLS OF CLADICH.

BELOW the bridge of Cladich are five pools,
And each one overflows into the next,
And in the last and deepest of them all
I am a frequent guest. The timid trout
Must wonder what commotion there can be
When I invade their haunts with noisy plunge,
And a tall, gleaming figure—huge to them—
Moves godlike through their golden-lighted halls.
I like to tread the water of those pools—
Those deep, cairngorm-like pools—and see my limbs
Dilated and gigantic, sunbrowned, too,
Like tawny thews of Titans thrusting down
The deeps beneath my feet. I like to take
A heavy stone—the largest I can lift—
And walk down bravely with unflinching eyes,
Gazing around me in the mellow light
That fills the shades below, then drop the stone,



And hear it thunder like a falling crag—
For sight and sound alike are magnified
Below the waters. I have often thought
That the deep sea must be a noisy realm ;
And when the mermen revel, shouting songs
Of merriment, their orgies must be heard
For leagues along its vast, unmeasured fields.

THE PILGRIM OF WINDERMERE.

“Sing there what thou canst see, sing as if no scald had hymned it before.”—HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

I DWELL in lands whose beauty is unknown
 Unto themselves, for they are poor in lakes.
 These hills around me have not closely bound
 The produce of their streams in the wide valleys ;
 But through unguarded passes rivers flow
 That drain the countrý, and a growing town
 Spreads where a lake's deep bottom might have been.
 Sometimes my selfish fancy would conceive
 The town unbuilt, the mountain barriers closed,
 And all the concave valley with its park,
 Embattled hall, and avenues of oak,
 And hundred farms, a sheet of silent water,
 Wherein the sunsets and the solemn clouds
 Might be reflected, and the starry nights
 Build their dim mountains on a sky below.
 I had not seen a lake (save one small tarn
 Amongst the hills, around whose dreary marge

I wandered often), so that in my heart
A passion grew that would have blotted out
Its dearest earth, surrendered, yielded all
Its best associations to the floods.
The towers of Sodom were not well exchanged
For deadly waters, yet I could have looked
On Asphaltites with complacency.

I rode away in summer, when the boughs
Chequered with shade the whiteness of the lanes.
That night I rested near a ruined abbey,
Close by a river which, with level course,
Brushed its right side against a sweep of wood,
Washing the pendulous branches. Like a bow
Of gleaming silver, lost in meadow-grass,
The river bounded that monastic plain :
The moon was rising on the wooded hills,
And on the still deep waters nearest me
Her image brightened. Then before her face
A broad wing passed, and on the opposite bank
A stately heron poised herself to fish.
I clapped my hands, and that most noble bird
Rose with low-hanging stilts, and head thrown back,
And beak that seemed to spear the lofty moon,
And heavy wings that flapped the dusky air.

The morning sun foretold a burning day ;
And when the languor of the hazy noon

Stole on myself and my tormented steed
I saw blue hills afar, and winding past
Sweet cottages, whose fronts of dazzling white
With rose and woodbine nourished hives of bees,
The road more steep now led me up the hills,
Whose curving lines and everchanging forms
I saw before in glimpses through the trees.
It led me out into the open heat ;
My weary steed went on with loosened rein
From side to side, displacing with his hoof
Loose gravel and white stones, till on the brow
He rested, sweeping with his silken tail
His tortured flanks, and oft the nerves beneath
Convulsed the shining hide whereon had fixed
Some thirsty fly. Descending cautiously
By a steep road into a silent vale,
Which a bright river watered, we received
A pleasant shelter in green-lighted lanes,
And up the aisle of trees a gentle wind
Came from the stream to kiss and welcome me.
And then the road led out upon a green,
Whereon a little ancient chapel stood.
Here I dismounted, and sought out a pool
Where I might bathe unnoticed. Sweeping round
A wooded cone that bared its rocky foot
And stratified foundation to the stream,
Whose soft hand chafed away its verdant robe
And felt its inner structure ; sweeping round

This hill the river held its onward way
In reaches broad and long, all avenued
With lofty woods.

I left this place at sunset,
And slept that night amongst the dreary hills:
The next day's route was on a lonely moor
Beneath a leaden sky. We slowly climbed
A long ascent, my weary steed and I;
And when at last we reached the rainy height
I saw a plain that stretched to the horizon,
Flat from the mountain's foot, and lifted up
Its woods and fields, till level with the eye
They melted to a blue and cloudy verge,
Approaching one thin distant line of white,
That seemed suspended high mid earth and cloud.
That was the sea. Those wild fantastic shapes
That rest on the horizon in the north,
Like heaped-up clouds beyond the fatal sands
Which now the tide has deluged with a sea,
Those are the mountains of rough Westmoreland;
And down below me, by the river Lune,
The tower and town of princely Lancaster.

I crossed the Leven on a glorious day,
Resting at noon within a natural tent
Of leafy branches; and the pilgrim's feet
Were kindly washed by a sweet rivulet.
A range of hills with brows of whitest rock

Bounded the valley like a battlement.
Above them in the sky some level lines
Of slender cloud hung white and motionless.
Behind them rose a tall and splendid mass,
From whose bright sides the vapours loosely fell,
And floated off upon the streams of air.

The children in the meadows raked in lines
The sun-dried hay from the close-shaven ground,
And bared the silvery grass that blanched beneath.
Some fields whose summer produce had been housed
Already wore a tint of tender green,
Fair as the hue of spring. I left those fields,
And riding up a hill beheld the sun
Set in the mountains from an equal height
Whereon I stood, and like a conqueror
Throned in the saddle traced my line of march.
Like him I slept too in the open air ;
A meadow newly mown my bed of state,
Curtained by mountains, with the azure sky
Most richly wrought with heraldries of stars
For its high tester. Tracing those designs,
Swords, belts, and creatures which the phantasy
Of early dreamers hung in boundless space—
Lulled by the music of a waterfall,
And rustling foliage, and the booming beetles
Whose wings were faint, then loud, then fainter still,
As they flew past me—watched by the full moon,

Who kissed me as she kissed Endymion —
Breathing the scents of nature, every sense
Faded in sleep. Stars changed to nebulae.
All sounds were mingled; and the distant bark
Of moon-struck housedogs mingled with the hum
Of insects and the noise of waterfalls;
Then melted into dreams.

When I awoke,
The moon's round edge had touched the misty hill;
And groups of stars had set; and standing by,
My horse was neighing, pawing the wet ground,
And blowing with loud nostrils in my ear.
So I arose, and by the northern star
Pursued the last stage of my pilgrimage.
Star-lighted glow-worms glittered in the fern,
Down in the dew. On one side of the lane
Were meadows covered with a silver mist,
With clumps of wood for islands, which deceived
Mine unaccustomed eye with eager hopes
That underneath that mist was Windermere.

I passed a silent village, still as death;
Then by the cold light of the breaking day
Explored a path that led me to the lake.
It was a mirror which the sleepy night
Had clouded with her breath. The wooded isles
Arose like bergs of green fantastic ice,
With snowy fissures from a polar sea.

Across the lake a lofty range arose,
Guarding the other shore, with gloomy heights
Reflected deep ; but far the northern peaks
Were faintly purple—over miles of lake
Casting no image. All was like a dream—
The living mist, the islands, and the hills,
The pale cold stars, dim light, and yellow east.
I felt like some knight-errant who had strayed
Through midnight regions till he reined his steed
On some enchanted shore of Fairyland.
Answer me, Echo ! thrice the bullet splashed,
And thrice it broke the surface of the lake ;
Still no reply—sweet Echo dwells not here.
Wait ! she had heard my single-voiced salute,
And was preparing a more royal volley.
From the dark fortress of the opposite hill
A rattling peal of musketry was poured ;
Then faint with distance roared the purple north,
Again the nearer mountains, and again !

At noon I started from a dreamless rest,
And pulled all day a boat from isle to isle.
The scene had changed, its mystery was gone,
But perfect beauty loses not a charm
By that exposure which reveals it more.
The sleepy mist had soared into the sky,
And rolled in massive heaps of sunny cloud,
Casting swift shadows down upon the hills ;

And rounded knolls of green, where all was blue
And flat before, were gleaming in the sun.
The starlight icebergs changed to island groves,
And by their lawny shores and pendulous boughs
I glided smoothly. You might see the rocks
That heaped the spreading base of every isle,
In grey clear detail underneath the boat
Sloping away into the darkest depth
Like the broad feet of mountains. Bright as gods
With glowing figures, naked in the sun,
Some groups of boys are bathing near the bank.
White sails are shining out against the trees
That greenly plume the islands. Many boats
Are glancing past me, and their flashing oars
Are doubled by reflections white and blue.
The crowded steamer leaves the village pier ;
Its paddles splash ; it flaunts a gaudy flag ;
And brazen music loudens into noise
As its black hull approaches—it is past.
A smoke wreath curls between me and the sun ;
And the poor stricken water swells in waves,
Not like the glad excitement of a storm,
But very whales of torture—painful hurts,
That grate my boat in madness on the rocks.

I rowed till dusk, and then a gentle breeze
Rippled the water white beneath the sky ;
But in the west the sun had left a haze

Of crimson richness, and the wooded shores
And verdant knolls again were lost in blue.
Unmarked with detail, all the distant hills,
From rugged outline and exalted peak
To the white level of the rippling mere,
Were filled in with a cold and even blue,
A little purple near the crimson mist.
The nearer mountain was a sombre brown,
Like an old painter's background, and the lake
Reflecting it; no shore was visible—
The hill and its reflection massed in one.
An island lay between me and the moon
Like a black hulk; but as I glided past,
That gloomy island seemed to float away,
Revealing on the wavelets such a path
Of silver light as angels' feet might tread.
Then music reached me from a distant band,
And I was left as lonely as before,
When under morning stars I reined my steed
On the cold shore of mystic Windermere.*

* This poem is in every respect a study from nature. In the summer of 1852 I rode on horseback through the English Lake District; and, leaving my horse at Penrith, extended my journey to the Hebrides. "Staffa" and "Sunrise on Ben Lomond" owe their origin to the same tour. The scene of the bivouac was the valley of Crosthwaite in Westmoreland.

STAFFA.

I ENTERED Fingal's cave, where some have learned
 To scorn the art of Michael Angelo.
 They made a most unfit comparison,
 Here is not Art but Nature. All is rude ;
 And the dark pillars are not hewn alike,
 But each retains its individual mark —
 The impress of infinity. Man's pride
 Of great conception and accomplished ends
 Is not the glory of this ocean cave.
 Look on its pavement—not of marble smooth,
 Level, and safe, and thronged with worshippers —
 But water full of motion, emerald green,
 And effervescing with its inward life.
 Between the glossy, rugged colonnades,
 Waves sweep in swift procession to the sound
 Of their own mighty voices, but the deep
 Enters this portal with small reverence.

The waves outside come crowding like a host,
Whose white impatient plumes toss to and fro,
Before the black gate of a citadel.
And one by one they leave the open day
To die in this dull cavern, wildly torn
Into a thousand pouring waterfalls,
As from the slippery tops of broken shafts
They plunge into the concave of the sea.
And then before the dripping stones are bare
Another breaker rises up, and up,
Rushing into the darkness, and you hear
How at the farthest end it madly breaks
Its forehead on the rock, and staggers back,
And backward falling with a lifeless weight,
Stunned, splashing, drowning, senseless with the shock,
Is borne away by the retreating surge !
This echoing strife would drown the chaunt of priests ;
And what would learned Architecture gain
By study of these pillars ? Look around !
Where are the toys of artificial faith —
Altar or chancel, cloister, transept, nave,
Piscina, credence, organ, pulpit, screen ;
Or thurible, or vestment for a priest ;
Or pix, or monstrance for the sacrament ;
Or candlestick, or sculptured imagery ?
These white-robed gulls would make a sorry choir —
They scream less tunefully than choristers.

The time for building pyramids is past :
And they approached most nearly to the bulk
Of nature's hills, whose chambers are these caves.
But wherefore choose this wild and gloomy hole
To shame the patient skill of architects,
Who raised cathedrals twice as vast as this ?
Compare the sunsets that you rate so cheap,
When distant isles float purple on the sea,
With all the paintings in your galleries,
And Art is humbled. Place you side by side
A handful of the common flowers that spring
In all damp nooks, with human workmanship,
So handicraft becomes mere idleness.
Planets will bear comparison with balls
That take short flights across a cricket-field ;
And gas-lamps look dismayed before the sun,
Although they be the wonder of our streets.
But marble floors of many hues inlaid,
And fair mosaic on our polished walls,
And brazen gates, and ceilings bossed with gold,
And windows that upon the naked light
Fling as it enters many-coloured robes,
As luxuries of worship far surpass
This pavement of wild water, and this roof
Irregularly arched, with fissures rent,
Illumined by the ocean's glancing lights.

'T is vain to argue—for Sir Joseph Banks

Has testified more strongly to the power
Of this old fabric by his strange mistake,
Than I with all my rule and measurement.
Therefore I will forgive him, though he made
A needless onslaught on a noble art.
Let all be fools in Staffa—for the brain
That is not dead to the divinity
Of Nature is oppressed in such a place.
Let all be fools in Staffa !

As for me,

I only said, “ This is no handiwork
Of any mere mechanic ; for I find
No sign of square or measure,—but instead,
Rough blocks for columns, rude and various.
Yet most unlike in its unaltered use
Is this to any edifice of man ;
For our cathedrals have survived their creeds ;
Their ancient music traverses no more
With waves of sound their ribbed and vaulted roofs ;
Whereas the surges in this rugged cave,
Whose date no learned antiquary knows,
Have one eternal law—one endless hymn,
Which they shall sing for ever and for ever ! ”

NOTE.

“Compared to this, what are the cathedrals or the palaces built by man?—mere models or playthings!—imitations as diminutive as his works will always be when compared to those of nature. Where is now the boast of the architect? Regularity—the only particular in which he fancied himself to exceed his mistress Nature—is here found in her possession.”—SIR JOSEPH BANKS.

Let us make the comparison to which Sir Joseph invites us. St. Peter's at Rome, though a “mere model,” and a “*diminutive* imitation,” shall supply an instance of what man may do, as far as dimension only is concerned, to rival the Cave of Fingal.

ST. PETER'S.			FINGAL'S CAVE.		
		ft.			ft.
Length	.	610	Length	.	227
Breadth of <i>façade</i>	.	465	Breadth	.	42
Height of <i>façade</i>	.	150	Height	.	66
Height of dome.	.	450			

There is, however, an effect of indestructible strength and overpowering massiveness in the solid walls of columns, whose immense thickness is visible at the entrance, unrivalled in architecture, though nearly approached by the twin towers of some castle gateways, guarding the gloomy arch of the portal.

INDOLENCE.

My heart is wasting like a loosened vine
That clings to nothing, or an empty mine
 Left hollow to the winds.

A spirit wanders in those chambers yet ;
But, save the sorrows I would fain forget,
 No theme for thought he finds.

He moulds them into polished rosary beads,
A dying plant produces withered seeds ;
 And round his brow he binds,
Not the green laurel—but a wreath of weeds.

INDUSTRY.

My days are never weary, yet I toil
Like a strong plough that turns a stony soil ;
 A harvest it shall bear !
My soul is precious land I hold from God —
Early and late I furrow every sod,
 And drop the rich seed there.
And still I feel no weariness nor pain
Steal over me. My labour is not vain,
 For, reared with earnest care,
Autumn will show her sheaves of golden grain !

THE BEACON.

THERE was of old a low and moated Peel
Belcaguered, and alone in its distress,
For succour was not near. But far away
Beyond the hills there dwelt a friendly lord,
Whose aid was promised to the lonely squire ;
And on a signal mutually agreed,
He was to come to his deliverance.

Then said the gallant squire unto his sons :
“ We have maintained this tower until the last ;
But now we starve ; therefore God speed you well,
That you may light the beacon.” So the boys
Crept forth at even by a secret way,
And searching out the least frequented paths
Went swiftly. Now between them and the hill
There lay a sluggish haze that would not move,
And drunk with moisture, in the afternoon

In noisy sleep did press the windy fields.
Their journey was a wearisome ascent,
Not steep, but long ; whose work was half undone
By two most dreary valleys. As they walked,
Higher and wider grew the pale horizon ;
And looking whence their succour was to come,
They saw the east grow clearer and more blue.
But the last valley closed them all around ;
And out of it arose a massive heap,
Sloping behind, but facing like the wall
Of some high fortress our adventurers.
Ascending this, they rested halfway up ;
And gazing eastward, to their grief beheld
A red, dim haze that hid their hope of aid.
Still they ascended ; and upon the top
They found a little tower of shapeless stones,
Built mortarless, and rudely circled there.
“ Here we will rest,” said one, “ until the night
Shall come and make our beacon visible.”
So sheltered in that roofless hut they sat,
Their backs against the wall, through which the wind
Blew keenly, and their arms about each other.
Thus did they watch the slow-declining sun.
Beyond the moor they saw the distant hills
Rise from the mist wherein some little tarns
Lay sparkling ; and before their resting-place
Two dark brown pools were hollowed in the heath.

The wind increased behind, and one arose,
And wandered on the mountain, gazing round,
Standing upon the verge of that steep end
They had ascended. Looking to the north,
He saw a plain beneath him like a lake,
That hid the foot of that bold precipice,
Whose shadow stretching far had gathered in
Green farms to the estate of coming night.
Afar there rose grey mountains marked with snow,
Preserved in their cold fissures ; and beyond,
Others whose details distance had effaced
Flat shapes of airy blue against the sky,
In colour and solidity like clouds.
Rock, hill, and silver stream, and gloomy wood,
And pines that blackened the pale green of fields,
Melted upon the base of distant hills.
And far above his eye as these below,
Heavily hung the leaden-coloured clouds ;—
Some still, but polished by the upper winds,
As rocks are worn by never-ceasing streams ;
Some like the shreds of hurricane-rent sails,
That fly at sunset o'er the heaving sea.
Lower and lower streamed the ragged mist,
Till, looking backward to the beacon-mound,
He saw it come between ; and hurrying through,
Rejoined his brother in his stony seat.

Then sun and hill and shining tarn were wrapped

In one cold shroud of mist. The howling wind
Grew fiercer, and the night came slowly on.
They slept, but restlessly, and shivering drew
Closer and closer, when their half-shut eyes
Saw but the cold grey stones. At last one said,
“I think I see a star,” for the swift cloud
Was rent a moment, but it closed again,
And darkness overcame. Then he arose,
And tottering from the violence of the storm,
At last succeeded in procuring fire ;
And dropped a spark of flint upon the tinder.
And next he lighted with a torch of pine
The fagots sheltered in that little tower
From the wet misty wind ; and throwing thickly
Sulphur and nitre on the rising flame,
With orpiment, it waxed tall and blue,
And overtopped the walls, where the loud wind
Caught it, and hurled afar its vivid stream.

The elder looking eastward—for his help,
Or hope of help, was there—beheld the wind
Come howling on him like a troop of ghosts,
White with its load of vapour ; whereupon
His shadow stood dilated, dim, and changing.
That shade with flying cloak and levelled plume
Trod darkly on the cloud above the abyss,
Then mingled with the darkness as the fire
Died out. They left the embers black and red,

With little streams of golden lava bright,
And slowly striding to the stormy verge,
There battled with the winds that did lay siege
To that high fastness, with a mighty roar
Of voices louder than the shouts of war !
A dismal greyness was before their eyes.
Unconscious of their dizzy altitude,
They saw no plains or undulating hills,
Now trampled by white armies of the storm ;
But hand in hand they crept across the edge,
And with their poles before them slowly stepped
From turf to turf down that steep precipice.
And every foot dislodged a cloud of dust
From the fine peat-earth, which the hurricane
Flung up like hail into their blinded eyes.
Thus for a weary hour they did descend,
Leaning upon the wind, until the way
Led over debris and became less steep.
And from beneath their feet the boulder stones
Rolled down into the darkness. Then they found
The rugged track by which they had ascended,
And splashing through a little mountain stream,
No more opposed by the abating wind,
Found halfway down a shepherd's narrow hut,
And rested.

It was well : for in that night
Their signal had been hidden by the mist,
The Peel burnt down, their gallant father slain ;





And one old faithful servant who escaped
Awoke them in the hut with woeful news.
They hid some wretched days and then departed,
And dwelt till manhood with the friendly earl,
Through whom their ancient manors were restored.

MOONRISE.

O LOOK at that superb autumnal moon
That rises from behind the manor-house
That crowns the knoll! I've watched the cloudy sky
Grow brighter till the globes upon the gables
Stood round and clear against the fleecy clouds;
And now I see one black against her disc,
A transit as of Mercury 'cross the sun.

MY OWN STUDY.

"In what is familiar and near at hand, the ordinary poet discerns no form or comeliness: home is not poetical but prosaic But yet as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets 'a sermon on the duty of staying at home.'

"The poet, we cannot but think, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the ideal world is not remote from the actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet precisely because he can discern it there."—CARLYLE.

If you have read some hundreds of these lines,
 Reader, you've grown quite intimate with me;
 And, like a favoured friend, I make you now
 Free of the little study where I write;
 So that, whenever near the bolted door
 I hear your footstep, I shall open it:
 And if you be a Lady Beautiful,
 I am your subject, you my royal guest—
 You shall receive the welcome of a queen
 From one you honour so.

It is a room
 Wherein my youthful fancy has run wild—

Antique and rich—a little Abbotsford.
Herein concentrates all my love of home—
A narrow region, yet an ample chase
For such unbounded and immense pursuits,
As all the years of life could not exhaust.
I here surround myself with memories
Of the great past, and hopes for time to come.
Science farsighted, speaking prophecy;
And History, a garrulous old man
With a bad memory, mixing useful truth
With spurious tales, repeated till the tongue
By habit forfeits the advice of Doubt,
The sire of Science.

My small armoury,
(A helmet from the priory of Kirklees,
With sword and pistol underneath it) hangs
Above the panels of the chimneypiece.
That iron cap reminds me of the grave
Where Robert rests, “the Erle of Huntingdon.”
The pistol has belonged to some dragoon
In Cromwell’s war; ’t was found in yonder orchard,
Deep in the soil beneath a damson-tree.
Some highbacked chairs are ranged about the room—
One laden with portfolios. On the walls,
A sword or two, and horns of buffaloes,
With portraits of old Flemish Burgomeisters,
Copied from Rembrandt with a boyish hand
Unequal to translate his majesty.

Still in the evening light those bearded men
Sit calmly gazing from their oaken frames,
Not ill according with the sombre room.
Like strong supporters of a blazoned shield,
My hearth is guarded by two massive chairs,
Whose backs and arms are rough with carvings quaint :
That which is near the window has a desk
Beside it ; there I labour in the day :
But when long evenings come in winter time,
I light my lamp upon the little table
That to the wall on one stout pillar stands,
Close to the other chair, and there I sit
Reading the Poets ; while upon the hearth,
Languid and panting with oppressive heat,
And barking feebly in her doating dreams,
Lies my old dog, the friend of many years.
Old friend ! I pause a moment to record
Our long attachment, and my own regret
That years which bring increasing strength to me
Are thy decay. Sleep on that glowing hearth,
Thou dost not fear a colder place of rest.*

I have not shown you all. Those bookcases
Between the carved pilasters there recessed
Afford a curious index to my taste.
My good old tutor shakes his wealthy head,
And gravely looks unutterable things ;

* Written before her death. See "My Old Dog's Grave."

For Homer sleeps with half his leaves uncut —
Yes, I confess it — half his leaves uncut —
And Cæsar slumbers near Herodotus.
Shakspeare is more disturbed than Sophocles,
And Thomas Moore than sweet Anacreon ;
Byron than Ovid ; Pindar yields to Pope ;
And Virgil, sadly thumbed in idleness,
To Milton gives precedence, as he ought.
But Horace — “ Horace whom I hated so,”
Conciliates me by opening at the place
Where he describes a little glassy stream,
An ilex, and some water-hollowed rocks.
I hate the cant of sanctity, but have
Some Bibles better read than you suppose ;
Sermons of old divines, and sounder strength
Of recent thinkers ; books on harlot Rome,
Collected when my soul in ignorance
Burned to behold the doom of Antichrist ;
Rejoicing when the Roman mob expelled
Pius from the Quirinal, deeming thus
The island saint’s dark prophecy fulfilled —
Foreshadowings of the dread Apocalypse !
These on the higher shelves, but nearer hand,
The jarring sounds of controversy change
To music written by more gentle souls,
Whose very lives were songs and melodies —
Beethoven, Spohr, Viotti, and Mozart.

As sweet as these, as perfect harmonies,
The vignettes of that wonderful old man
Whose being was a myth, a mystery,
Secluded in a city, at whose death
The feeble critics whom his works refute
Confessed his greatness. His was honest faith
In nature, which would not anticipate,
With crude and childish systems of its own,
The wisdom it at length interpreted.
Rogers was guided by unerring sense
As well as taste, when, like a prudent father,
He gave the gentle daughters of his brain,
Refined, accomplished, bred in elegance,
In marriage to the works of such a man.
Painters may thank thee, Rogers ; for thy pen
Exulteth not in mountains, while to him
They were companions ; and thy words are thus
Subdued and quiet foils to Turner's force.
So Painting triumphs over Poetry,
Lines over language. His superior strength
Lifts up thy weakness to a higher seat
Than thou, unaided, mightest hope to reach.
Together welcome, then, ye wedded works,
Together welcome to my choicest shelf !

We will not spoil a festival of bookworms,
Or break upon a banquet, or disturb
Those heavy tomes of county history,

Which no one cares to study but myself.
But this old griffin cabinet wants air
In its recesses, for its doors conceal
A heap of parchment genealogies,
With shields of worth besprinkled, some the toil
Of a strange boyhood spent in odd pursuits.
This oak-bound volume, full of shields of arms,
Each shield illumined on a leaf of parchment,
With brazen clasps and tassels like a missal,
Remains a trophy of my wanderings
Among the fossil lore of feudal times.
But brighter trophies of a nobler chase
Are treasured in the same old cabinet—
They were the dearest playthings of a child,
Whose pastimes were instruction. Pillars, jars,
And cylinders of crystal, spheres of brass,
And pointed rods, and coils of covered wire,
Relics of days when streams of purple sparks
Were to myself as thunderbolts to Jove;
And Knowledge first exulted in her strength,
And coiled her iron, clothing it with force
To lift huge weights, then suddenly deprived,
Drop them in utter weakness, paralysed,
Like a strong athlete stricken by disease.

My window faces to the morning sun,
And in its bright recess has found a place
My music-stand, whose pillar bound with vines

Supports a panel which the carver left
Blank in the centre only, tempting me
Anachronism so to disregard,
That in the little circle you behold
A bronze medallion head of Paganini !
Now in the darkest corner of the room
My folded easel leans against the wall ;
But on the table with my favourite books
Etchings are scattered, and the precious prints
Of Albert Durer, him of Nuremberg.

'Tis evening now, and through the painted glass
The mellow light of early autumn falls.
There are six yew-trees in the garden square ;
And a coeval sundial in the midst.
The level breeze that plays upon the beds,
With tender fingers lifts the scarlet bells
Of the rich fuchsia ; and the velvet leaves
Of that bright overblown anemone
Are curling backwards, blazing to the sun.
There is a tree of scentless mignonette ;
Poppies with ribbon leaves, and many flowers
I love so well, that every morn I seek
To greet them with a pretty English name.
Mallows with petals softly pencilled deep,
That treasure in the bottom of their cups
A little cinquefoil of transparent green ;
Nasturtians rambling wide with table leaves,

Whereon the crystal dew of early morn
Lingers till noon, and flowers of golden hue,
From which the limners of monastic times
First learned to shade their yellows with carmine ;
A mountain flower, the dwarf campagnula,
With little snowy bells in tender green ;
Horned violets ; and pansies purple-winged,
With golden petals deepening where they meet ;
A cinquefoil once all yellow with its flowers,
But now declining like a generous heart,
Who, having scattered freely all his gold,
Is beggared in the autumn of his life.

All these are glowing through my lower panes,
With richer hues than any painted glass
That ever gleamed in Gothic tracery.
Nor want they fit relief, for sombre green
Clothes the six yews, whose solid cones arise
At all the angles of the garden walks,
Trimmed as they have been for a century.
The orchard lies beyond ; the meadow then,
With its plantations backed by distant hills ;
And over all the blueness of the sky.

I will not close the curtains, for the time
Is full of beauty. Near the southern tree
Venus is brightening in the quiet air ;
And from the lofty gable overhead

An owl has launched, and takes his buoyant flight
On ghostly wings between the mournful yews.

The dewy meadow is exhaling mist
That whitens in the moonlight like a lake,
Round clumps of birches fair as wooded isles.
Broad paths of shadow streak the glistening grass
Down gentle slopes. The dark plantations round
Grow faint with mist between. The distant hills
Melt all their outlines into vapour dim,
Along their ridges heavily-streaming red
Beneath the warm, grey sky. Now open wide
The window—listen to the flooded brook,
Still flooded though subsiding, in the glen,
Murmuring amongst the rocks with hollow voice.
The waning moon is grey, with sunken cheek.
Clouds there are none, save one ascending bank
That mars the outline of the southern hill.
The stars are few, and all their stony orbs
Gleam deathlike through the dull discoloured sky.

But close the window now, for I have grown
Half sad with the solemnity of night.
I draw the crimson curtains, light my lamp,
And read again the “Ancient Mariner,”
Or that mysterious torso “Christabel.”



A DREAM OF NATURE.

“ And fast beside there trickled softly downe
 A gentle streame, whose murmuring wave did play
 Emongst the puny stones, and made a sowne
 To lull him soft asleepe that by it lay.”—*The Faërie Queene*.

*This poem breathes the spirit of the scene
 Wherein I spent the springtime of my youth ;
 Where I first worshipped Nature and her truth,
 And where in elder time one may have been*

*Whose perfect manhood bore a riper fruit
 Than I dare hope for my maturer age ;
 Yet still in toils like his I would engage,
 Although my sole reward be pleasure in pursuit.**

I KNEW a learned boy who used to sit
 Upon a rooted stone, with starry leaves

* See note.

Of lichen grey, and cushioned with green moss ;
And there he would unfold a little store
Of plants he had collected by the stream.
’T was in the early summer, when at noon,
Wearied with walking, in a secret place
Amongst the rocks he sought an hour of sleep.
The longings and the thoughts of boyish love
Found objects in his dreams, whereof the scene
Was ever in cool caves, or mossy banks,
Or deep, refreshing pools. Of rarest plants
And birds that seldom visit us, he dreamed ;
And fossils in the stones and in the sky,
Such wondrous combinations as we see
Once in a lifetime. If humanity
Peopled the land, it was in noblest form
And most refined development. But though
His fancy was thus elegant, he found
An equal happiness in common things ;
For in his dream the shady alder grew,
And ash with oval leaf, and hazel shrubs,
And glossy ivy. On the ragged sods
About the roots, the undeveloped ferns
Reared up their crozier heads of silvery white,
Or powdered with a bloom of frosted gold,
Amongst their delicate scroll-work. Round about,
The ground was thickly strewed with primroses.
Some dark rocks dripped with tributary springs,
And crowds of lilies choked the dampest nooks ;

But on the sunny banks an azure light
Hung o'er a thousand *nebulæ* of flowers.
Anemone, and hyacinth, and bells
That drew the bee into their silent mouths,
Were waving near a water-ousel's nest.
Before the entrance of a little cave
Long creepers hung, and every angled leaf
Cast a sharp shadow on the rocky front,
Polished by many floods. The water flew
In domes of crystal o'er the rounded stones,
Gilded with solar images, and bright
With azure of the sky. The young man's dream
Led him from stone to stone, until he turned
The corner of a rock ; and in his ear
The heavy water sounded as it fell.
And thereupon he started in his sleep —
For, white against the snowy waterfall
There stood a lady mute and motionless.
On her fair shoulders fell a cloud of spray,
Above her glossy hair an iris hung.
Her eyes were dark and wild, and cornered with
Vermilion. Down her pure transparent skin
The bright drops chased each other, hanging long
About her breasts, that like two shapely knolls
Covered with wintry snow, shone white and cold ;
Upon their tops the rosy sunset hue ;
Their round sides bright with streams. Below her knees
The water did embrace her ; but there gleamed

Upon its rippling surface everywhere
Beautiful tints ascending from her feet.
Two crimson-spotted trout were playing there,
Touching her shapely limbs as worshippers
Lean against marble pillars smooth and tall
Of some most sacred edifice. At this
The youth grew restless with enchanting thoughts,
And murmured passionate words; but afterwards
Dreamed on that by the self-same waterfall
He stood and sought her vainly. Still the moss
Was green beneath the spray that once had clothed
Her shining shoulders, and the loving trout
Were darting to and fro. The sun had set,
And white before the moon, its iris lost,
Plunged the distracted water. Every hue
Faded to pearly green or blackest voids;
And on the cold foam not an azure streak;
And on the crystal domes no golden light.
There was a tender greyiness in the sky;
And past the moon, like revellers returning,
Cloud after cloud was hurrying towards the east,
Casting swift shadows on the rivulet.
Then through the pendulous boughs, and round about
The banks of fern and hyacinth, and in
The hollows of the rocks, there wandered loose
A voice that sometimes on the primrose beds,
And sometimes on the water, seemed to rest.
He sought her in the caves and in the pools,

Till as he stood beneath a shelving rock,
That voice fell from above ; and looking up,
He saw a ladder made of tangled roots,
And fractures of the stone. Ascending this,
In the full moonlight gorgeously reclining
Did he behold the lady of the stream.
Her dark locks wandered in the tall young grass ;
And, kissing all her body with sweet lips,
Beneath her lay faithful forget-me-nots.

She ceased her song, and welcomed him with smiles,
And looked upon him with such kindness,
That grasping her white hand with reverence
And wonder at her beauty, by her side
He knelt, till gazing in her tender eyes,
Trembling all over with delicious hope,
He would have kissed the bloom upon her lip.

Spell-bound, his hand fell powerless to his side.
His body grew benumbed and lost its use,
Oppressed by dreadful nightmare that confines
The soul—still conscious—in a stiffened corpse.
So that in safety, and beyond his reach
That fair, unguarded form, with careless grace,
Lay smiling in the flowers. With quiet eyes
The lady watched the boy's astonished air,
And with a touch of haughtiness in tone,
That quickly changed to kindness kindling hope,

She thus addressed him in the sweetest tongue
Whose music ever entered human heart.

“ Few hear my wandering voice as thou hast heard,
And fewer still discover my retreat ;
Yet, though thine eyes are drinking deep of love,
I am not won thus easily. The toil
That leads thee onward to my hidden joys
Must be a life-long struggle ; every pause
Of daily labour eloquent with prayer
Unto my Father that he may bestow
The wealth of all my glory upon thee.
I am immortal, and eternal youth
Clothes me with all that freshness which excites
Your hot desire. Let patience prove your love :
For if true faith outlast this boyish passion,
And all the wishes of increasing years
Still point to me alone, that constancy
Will meet its fit reward ; and if you come
In future years with patient training strong,
I will dissolve the spell that frets you now.”

The dreamer starting from his moonlit sleep,
Beheld the shadows of the ivy leaves
Still on the sunwarmed rock. He saw new thoughts
Come full of light from slumber's airy realm,
Whose wings resisted well the solar glare,
Not waxen like the pens of Dædalus ;

And thus, awaking, mustered all their band
In this soliloquy :

“ Yes, I will earn
Success, fair Nature, in pursuit of thee ;
And to thy service thus I dedicate
All my bright future, sitting at thy feet.
I now can see, although I fail to grasp
Thy purity within the waterfall,
And on the rippling surface everywhere,
Those living tints ascending from thy feet.
The trout do love thee, and the iris arch
Is thy tiara. On the primrose beds,
And through the pendulous boughs, and round about
The banks of fern and hyacinth, and in
The hollows of the rocks, thy voice is heard
By those whose ears, undeaftened by the roar
Of cities, can perceive thy melodies.”

NOTE.

A paragraph appeared in "The Times" of June 16, 1841, which perhaps assumed too confidently the success of Mr. F. Spenser of Halifax in identifying the family to which he belonged with that of the poet. It was re-produced in "Notes and Queries," (March 26, 1853), and answered in the same periodical on the ninth of the month following. The author of the reply grounds his principal objection to the paragraph on the fact that Hurstwood Hall was built by Barnard Towneley, and was for some time the property of his descendants. The building, however, which is supposed to have been honoured by the temporary residence of the author of "The Faërie Queene" is not Hurstwood Hall, but another house in the same village, probably of equal antiquity. The vignette illustrating this note was painted on the spot, and the house on the left is that which belonged to the Spensers, whereas a portion of the hall closes the view. Dr. Whitaker's silence on the subject is, after all, merely negative testimony ; and his researches, though laborious, by no means exhausted the districts he described. Mr. Craik, in his industrious work on "Spenser and his Poetry," enumerates the probabilities of the case. To him, therefore, I refer the reader for the details of the argument.





If Spenser ever visited Hurstwood, he must have crossed the Brun, there a beautiful rivulet about four miles from its source. And since the scene of the poem is about a mile lower down in the same valley, and by the same stream—and that, too, in the most picturesque part of its course—there is, I think, sufficient evidence to justify the allusion.

The “Dream of Nature,” it will be scarcely necessary to observe, is an early, and therefore of course a metaphysical poem. As I grow into natural philosophy the tendency to personification passes off. The warmth of colouring and the erotic sentiment of the allegory are mere boyishness, and will do no harm.

THE GLOW-WORM.

THE rolling worlds above
 Appear but twinkling stars,
 That burn with flames of love,
 As Venus shines for Mars :
 But on the garden bed
 There beams another light ;
 It shines for one who fled
 To call him home at night.

“ Come to my lonely breast,
 Come on thy rapid wings ;
 Here shalt thou find thy rest,—
 Here cease thy wanderings.
 I have no witching song
 To lure thee to delight ;
 But, burning all night long,
 My torch of love is bright.”

Thus in the days of old
 Angelic lovers came,
Descending to behold
 The soul-enticing flame.
It shone in woman's eyes,
 And lured them with its light
Down from their native skies,—
 Down from their starry height.

And when my rising soul
 Soars in the truth of day,
The powers of firm control
 Like waters ooze away.
My strong wings fail ere dark ;
 And when I yearn for right,
Love with its tempting spark
 Allures me to delight.

AVE MARIA.

THERE is a maiden at my side
 Who bids my frozen heart forget
 Philosophy with all its pride,
 And sing a sweet duet.

“Come, join your deeper voice to mine;
 And though the subject of the song
 Seem to your conscience not divine,
 It surely is not wrong

To sing the music that you feel
 To words that only aid the sound.”—
 Her voice was like a ringing peal
 From consecrated ground,

That comes with music o’er the fields,
 Where through a lonely soul it flows—
 A soul that hesitates and yields,
 Till with the crowd it goes,

And has not strength to think alone,
Or resolution to withstand
The calling of a pleasant tone
Into a dreamy land.

I sang in Rome's forgotten tongue
The prayer I knew was false and vain ;
But round my weakened heart was flung
A bright and pleasant chain.

I yielded all that once I knew ;
I never struggled in the snare ;
But sang the hymn and thought it true,
Converted unaware.

Idolaters may be forgiven,
Aids to devotion have their worth ;
My hymn was to a maid in heaven
Addressed to one on earth.

I looked upon her all the while ;
I searched the scripture of her eyes,
For my religion was her smile,
Her thoughts its mysteries.

Though my affections were above,
Still as devout adorers do,
I sang to Mary hymns of love,
And kissed her image too.

THE SANYASSI.

" I HAVE subdued at last the will to live,
 Expelling nature from my weary heart ;
 And now my life, so calm, contemplative,
 No longer selfish, freely may depart.
 The vital flame is burning less and less ;
 And memory fuses to forgetfulness.

Sometimes I gaze on vacancy so long,
 That all my brain grows vacant, and I feel
 That wondrous influence which doth make me strong
 In resolution and unworldly zeal,
 Until abstracted from all time and sense,
 I sink into eternal indolence.

And now I feel my inward life grow still,
 A being by itself, which fondly clings
 To consciousness which I can never kill,
 Yet is abstracted from all outward things,
 And slumbers often and is overgrown ;
 The sense of self increases when alone.

I have subdued the will, but gained the power
To dwell among the denizens of earth ;
I spread my spirit over tree and flower,
And human hearts, and things of meaner birth ;
And thinking thus to give my soul away,
I found it grew more conscious every day.

The simple crowds who hourly pass me by,
I think have lately grown afraid of me ;
There is some virtue in this sunken eye,
For sometimes in my dreams I faintly see
The workings of the spirit in the brain,
And living floods that gush in every vein.

Now am I weary of this vain endeavour
To lift my spirit to eternal sleep ;
I seek the marble stairs, the sacred river,
The liquid graves below, where calm and deep
Beneath where that bright, silent water flows,
Stretch wide the regions of divine repose."

With thoughts like these the Indian suicide
Dragged forth his stiffened limbs from his old lair ;
He had no garment on his shrivelled hide,
He shunned the grove, and sought the solar glare :
He never looked aside, and his dead march
Had for its goal a gate of one proud arch.

It rose in sculptured splendour on the view
From the surrounding foliage of dark green,
Whose masses of broad shadow did subdue
Its prominent light. The blue sky shone between.
A crowd was on the river's sacred marge,
And on the Ganges many a gaudy barge.

Down to that river he descended now ;
And as he pressed the last steps of the stair,
A glance of pleasure from beneath his brow
Fell on two jars of porous earthenware :
He seized them with his feeble hands, and tied
One of them to his girdle on each side,

And floated slowly from the crowded Ghaut ;
And since no friendly hand was stretched to save,
Found in those quiet waters what he sought—
A long rest and an honourable grave.
His faith was righteous, and his ending blest ;
And now his soul enjoys eternal rest.

TO BEATRICE AT PARTING.

Your image, love, when you depart,
Not long within your mirror stays ;
And thus by me your open heart
Was occupied some pleasant days.

But mine by Nature has been made
So sensitive to Beauty's light,
Your fixed reflection will not fade,
For there your photograph is bright.

And though a careless eye may see
No pertrait there except its own—
A thousand forms reflected be,—
It clings, my love, to yours alone !

LOVE AND LIGHT.

I KNOW a lady very bright
By candlelight.
She is a jewel richly set,
Her splendour made me half forget
A quiet girl that first I met
That very night.

That quiet girl, what has she done —
That quiet one?
I found her where the trees are green,
And where the sunlight falls between;
I cannot tell how long we've been
In the warm sun.

Though he looks down with glances hot,
She fears him not;

For well she knows that she can bear
The stern exposure of his glare ;
And daylight beauty baits the snare
Where I am caught.

The harebells fill the air with blue :
Their dazzling hue
Hangs like a cloud of azure light
Above them ;—so your own delight
Leaves your blue eyes, and takes its flight
Away from you,

Filling the atmosphere with love !
And high above
The sun that warms our hearts and veins—
Great sun, may who thy light disdains
Be blind for ever for his pains,
And darkly move !

Shine on us long this afternoon,
Night comes too soon !
My love was made to glad my sight,
Before the sun our troth we plight ;
Let lust and evil walk by night
With the blind moon !

MY OLD DOG'S GRAVE.

My dog is buried near the garden seat,
 And, when I sit there, slumbers at my feet,
 As she has done before ;
 So I prefer that place, that I may be
 Near one whose sweetest rest was nearest me,
 And thus in part restore
 The past of friendship, or at least revive
 Affections that grow faint and fugitive,
 When rendered back no more
 By those who paid them doubly when alive.

Her grave is deep—the sunbeams cannot reach
 Her coldness—nor the music of kind speech
 Enter her earth-stopped ear.
 She was as white as snow, and is as cold ;
 Pure once, but now defiled with garden mould ;
 And eyes that have been clear

Are dull, and full of dust that gives no pain—
They bear no image to the little brain—

She knows not I am near.

Her sleep is peaceful—let it so remain.

A loveless Sultan with a thousand wives
Knows nought of that affliction which deprives

A husband of his wife ;

And those who rate a dog by what he cost
Would never dream the half of what I lost

In such a little life.

She was my friend in boyhood, not my slave ;

My boyhood now lies buried in her grave,

And manhood's joyless strife

Opens before me on the world's rough wave.

In pleasant country scenes by hill and stream,

Her image haunts me like a waking dream ;

And in the deep, long grass,

When evening sunshine lights the crimson seeds,

And plays about the wild flowers and the weeds,

Her spirit seems to pass

With a faint rustle and a noiseless tread—

See ! the tall hayseeds wave above her head—

It is not so, alas !

It was the wind :—she lives not—she is dead !

My study hearth is cheerful still, and bright;
But from the rug one spot of living white

Is gone, and all seems dark.

And now I feel I am alone indeed—

No gentle eye to watch me as I read,

No little soul to mark

The changes of my countenance, and wait

Until the cinders blacken in the grate,

To rouse me with her bark—

I miss these little services of late.

My window looks upon her place of rest;

My hearth is cold as a forsaken nest:

But from the setting moon

Extends the shadow of the pointed yew,

And with its midnight finger it points true—

It will be midnight soon.

'T is on the home of one I could not save:

She loved the sun, and in return he gave

His richest beams at noon,

And scattered daisies on my old dog's grave.

He, when the earth was hardened round the dead

By nightly frosts, laid snowdrops on her bed,

His fairest coverlet.

And now I know how beautiful is death,

For her remains sustain them from beneath;

And she is living yet .

In humble flowers as meek as her meek nature,
As white and gentle as that gentle creature
Whose loss I so regret,
And each white flower becomes a living feature.

I would not slight the gentle faith of those
Who hope for compensation for the woes
Of even the inferior kinds,
In some eternal future which they guess—
Some future of such tranquil happiness
As well might suit their minds ;
Yet reason plucks the fairest wings of faith,
And owns the dark reality of death—
The common lot which binds
The higher creatures unto those beneath.

THE LAST LINK.

His dwelling is a palace of the arts ;
 And there, surrounded by the works of those
 With whom his soul has held communion,
 The silvery twilight of a hundred years
 Descends upon him.

We were three together,
 Talking away an afternoon of spring.
 The sun was shining in the public park,
 And threw the shadows of the window frames
 On the drawn blinds. The mellow light, diffused,
 Fell sweetly on Velasquez, and a glow
 Bathed Rubens and the hues of Veronese.
 There was no vulgar newness in the room,
 Nor gaudiness—the gilding dim with years,
 The furniture well worn by many guests—
 All things subdued into a calm repose,
 And harmonised by long companionship.

The ornaments so delicately wrought
About the sideboard, and the wooden plinth
Which reared a marble bust against the light,
Were carved by Chantrey when a working man.
The sculptor was presented to our friend
In the full bloom of knighthood and success —
By him, of course, received with courtesy ;
When great Sir Francis, having made his bow,
Remarked, “ I am not wholly strange to you —
You were an early patron, sir, of mine ;
For when my purse was scantily supplied
By the small wages that a journeyman
Could then obtain by carving, your designs
Provided labour for the very hand
Which you have grasped so kindly — there they are,
The records of your patronage.” Our friend,
Who valued them before as furniture
Done by some nameless but accomplished workman,
Esteems them now as trophies nobly won
In his first field of labour by a youth
Whose after conquests consecrated these.

Upon the sideboard stood a bust of Pope,
Modelled from life. The features, lank and old,
But full of thought, expressed a state of mind
Whose peace is bought by conquest. On the wall
A bracket bore another work in clay,
Done by the hand of Michael Angelo.

But even these had lost their interest :
For near them sat a grey old gentleman,
Gazing upon a picture which he praised
So warmly, that the painter (who sat by)
Soon changed the conversation. Then he spoke
Of other works, and asked "if I had been
Through all the house?" And truly scarce an inch
Of that rich mansion had I not explored,
From ground to roof one treasury of art,
Of pictures, books, and old engraven gems,
Busts, vases, and antiquities of price.
What elegance could be beyond his reach,
Whose very cornices and cabinets,
Fender and fire-irons, sideboard, chimneypiece,
Were painted or designed by men of note?
I thought this poet's lodging in the world
Exceeds my modest library, as mine
Does Burns's "auld clay biggin;" but the soul
Gains little from the luxuries of wealth;
And, after all, the wild and weedy banks
Of my own stream are worth perhaps to me
The galleries of Europe. Though I love
Art with a true and unaffected passion,
I do not envy him of whom I write
His precious pictures, but the groups of friends
Made happy by his kindness, who enjoyed
His pleasant breakfasts thirty years ago—
Byron, and Scott, and Turner, merry Hook,

Jolly Sir Francis, lively little Moore,
And all the rest.

They die off one by one :

But he, the last of those connecting links
Which bind the generations of mankind
In one long chain of friendship, still survives ;
And in the pressure of his gentle hand
I gained with many great men in their graves
A personal acquaintance, or at least
The introduction of a common friend.
So am I linked more closely with the past—
Myself a link between the past and future,
A new name on a pedigree of souls,
Whose friendship is paternal in its kind—
That of the old and young. This lineage
Of mere acquaintance has a strong effect
On youthful hearts. Connexion with the great,
Either by blood or intellect, inspires
A sense of duty—duty to perform
All that the world expects from us, and more.

REVELRY.

MERRILY, merrily, drink we all,
 Welcome guests at a jovial board !
 Eyes may wander—eyelids fall—
 Still let the precious wine be poured.
 Pour, pour !
 Till the goblet tall will hold no more :
 And high above its foaming brim,
 The miniature icebergs floating clear
 Coldly kiss the lips of him
 Whose cheeks are purple with good cheer.
 The claret jug—a graceful queen,
 Whose slender neck a silver vine
 Clasps for ever—stands between
 Two sister goblets emerald green,
 Filled again with perfumed wine !
 The precious liquid ebbs and flows ;
 The graceful vessel comes and goes ;

How replenished no one knows,
For no one here a thought bestows
On any mortal thing. .
Lower and lower the claret sinks ;
Deeper and deeper each good soul drinks,
Till he bows his head, and nods, and winks,
And falls asleep like a king.

A rich beaufet, whose carvings old
Are half-concealed by its velvet dress,
Occupies a deep recess,
Piled it is with plate of gold.
What with the taper's flooding light,
And the jewelled cups and dishes bright ;
And the rich beaufet with carvings quaint
Of many a face that would pass for a saint ;
And the sumptuous cloth of crimson deep ;
And the liveried servants — half asleep ;
And the sombre hue of the ancient oak ;
And a pastile fuming its fragrant smoke ;
And the light just falling wherever it should,
On silver, and gold, and polished wood ;
And the shadows deep that retire behind
Goblin shapes that haunt the mind ;
And the pictures that hang on the lofty walls ;
And the music that rises at intervals ;—
What with all these, it resembles indeed
The gorgeous church of an ancient creed ;

And justly — for Bacchus has ruled as long
As any religion, right or wrong ;
And by his inspiration the cleverest sages
Have written to edify future ages.
But all the gods are so very precise
In levying tax and sacrifice ;
And they charge such a very exorbitant price
For anything pleasant—which they call “vice.”
He lets us drink till the dawn of day—
He lets us drink our lives away ;
But at last he comes to claim his prey.
And the “generous” god, whatever they say,
Is a creditor harsh—and the devil to pay !

PARASITES.

INSECTS that draw their living from a steed
May think him useful for their present need,
But cannot judge his symmetry nor speed :

So parasites who feed upon the great
Become, in time, too closely intimate
To see the full proportion of their state.

LANCASHIRE BELL-RINGERS.

FROM the dark old belfry tower,
 From the ringers' lofty room,
 A steady light on a winter's night
 Shines golden through the gloom.

And the tracery of the window,
 Mullion, cusp, and quatrefoil,
 Shows clear and plain, for every pane
 Is bright with lamps of oil.

No marriage music gaily
 Its pleasant gossip tells,
 But low and soft from the ringers' loft
 There comes a sound of bells.

Those diligent old ringers,
 They practise many a tune !
 For they must go on the winter snow,
 Beneath the Christmas moon,

To all the country houses,
To ring their carols sweet,—
When, bells in hand, the ringers stand
Upon their freezing feet.

And through the curtained window
Their full-toned music comes,
Rich and clear it fills the ear,
Like a band with horns and drums.

The portly butler opens
The mansion's folding-door,
And in the hall their footsteps fall
Upon the oaken floor.

And whilst we sit at dinner
A dulcet jargoning
Floats softly round, then swells the sound
Until the glasses ring.

We'll go and watch the ringers,
And let the tankard stand.
They sit in a row—at once you know
The leader of the band.

He says, "For fifty winters
I have rung at Christmas here;
I never fail to drink your ale,
And taste your Christmas cheer."

“ Bring him the silver tankard !”

So the old man was consoled
With a draught of port of the proper sort,
And a coin of yellow gold.

And they gave us richer music ;
And the leader of the band
Struck up, and fast the bells were passed
Across from hand to hand.

TO A SARCASTIC BEAUTY.

YOUR breast is heaped like mountain snows ;
Your cheek is like a blushing rose ;
Your eyes are black as ripened sloes —
Like diamonds do they glitter.
I do not flatter like a fool :
The diamond is a cutting tool ;
The rose is thorny ; snow is cool ;
And sloes are very bitter.

TO HER BROTHER.

AN angel guarded me at birth ;
 And, when my sainted mother died,
 Withheld me from the hungry earth,
 And sweetly prophesied :

“ No, Death ! not yet. If overcome,
 He never can accomplish good ;
 But know you not that there are some
 Strongest in solitude ?

And such may be this orphan's strength ;
 He will improve his mental frame
 With lonely training, and at length
 Rise suddenly to fame.

Since Nature often makes amends,
 If he desire it, he may find
 A brother's heart amongst his friends —
 A brotherhood of mind.”

And thus, my friend, I found in you
Some compensation for the wrong
Of birth ; and since our love is true,
May it endure as long

As does a blood-relationship—
So long that each of us may hear
Approval from a rival's lip,
Believing it sincere.

By this I have a double gain—
A sister worthy of my love—
Unless her gentle heart disdain,
Or you might not approve

Such dear adoption, knowing well
That it might lead me farther still ;
And that affection would rebel
Against the yielding will,

Which would not drag her nature down,
Or shade the sunlight of her face ;
Or to the level of my own
Her better soul debase.

THE WIDOWED SWAN.

THE valley narrowed, and the lofty cliffs
Relieved their outline on the rainy sky,
An outline rough with crags ; and lower down,
Where it by steps descended to the fields,
The pines were bristling ; and the reddening birch,
And woods of oak upon the mountain's foot,
Approached the borders of a little tarn.
The sky was tinged with faint and flushing red,
Wherewith the clouds grew luminous, and showed
Within their masses forms and distances.

The water of the tarn was silvery white,
Enriched with rose reflected from above.
All round its shallow marge dark rushes grew :
And, as the water deepened, here and there
A little clump unwilling to be drowned
Pierced with sharp points the silver of the surface.

Amongst them floated like a lump of snow
A stately swan, so lifeless, still, and cold,
Except the graceful poising of the head
Almost inanimate. She came so near
That I could see the yellow of her beak,
And her black eyebrows and her mournful air,
For she was in the grief of widowhood ;
Her mate was dead, and from that other pond,
Where they had lived together with their young,
She flew across to this for change of scene.

Some water-hens were feeding on the land,
Which, with their breasts close-sweeping the wet ground,
Ran to the water-side when I approached,
And broke its silver with a trailing splash,
And in the rushes hid their dusky forms.
Small, lively, dark — what strange associates
For that majestic, snowy, stately swan !

THORWALDSEN'S DEATH.

THE play is interrupted—every eye
 Is on the place where the great sculptor sat :
 'T is but a moment since he sat and smiled,
 And then he sank—you could not say he fell
 Out of his chair, he sank so quietly.
 A whisper in the theatre of death,
 Death and Thorwaldsen—is Thorwaldsen dead ?
 Yes ! whilst you filled the place with loud applause
 He left you unobserved. The curtain falls,
 For a great soul has left the stage of life.
 The theatre is emptied, silent, dark,—
 Empty, and dark, and silent is the brain
 Once thronged with images of loveliness !

In the cathedral of the capital
 The King and Queen received the sculptor's bier.
 And as it slowly came along the aisle,
 With royal princes and the great of Denmark
 All weeping round it, the colossal Christ
 Which he had chiselled, looked serenely down,

And with its marble hands did welcome him
To his repose. On both sides stood the Twelve ;
And they bare living witness of the dead,
Whose hand had carved them for his monument.

NOTE.

This short poem was suggested by a conversation with a Danish Lady who had been personally acquainted with the great sculptor, and was in possession of a large and beautiful collection of his drawings. The particulars of the funeral are recorded in a volume of "The Illustrated London News," but are too long for extraction ;—not so the following vivid passage from Andersen's "Story of my Life."

"On the last day of his life I sat beside him at dinner ; he was uncommonly merry, repeated some witticisms, which he had just read in the 'Corsair,' a well-known Copenhagen paper, and spoke of the journey which he intended to undertake to Italy in the summer. We parted after this : he went to the theatre, I home. On the following morning the waiter at the hotel where I put up said, 'That was a strange thing about Thorwaldsen—that he died yesterday.' 'Thorwaldsen !' exclaimed I: 'he is not dead ; I dined with him yesterday.' 'They say that he died yesterday evening at the theatre,' said the waiter. I thought he had been taken ill, but still felt a strange anxiety, and hastened immediately over to his house. There lay his corpse, stretched out on the bed ; the room was crowded with strangers ; the floor wet with snow-water ; the air stifling. The Baroness Stampe sat on the bed and wept bitterly. I stood trembling, and deeply affected."

PERFUME.

FALSE girl ! thy sweetness had a price,
Thy richest scent was bought with gold ;
But real attractions are not sold,
And vain is all thine artifice.

The maid whose sweetness is her own
Needs not the attar's sprinkled showers ;
Nor Essence of a Thousand Flowers ;
Nor fragrant Water of Cologne.

I seek her as the honey bee
Seeks out some earthly paradise ;
Till in the pools of her blue eyes
The image of myself I see.

THE HELMETED SKULL.

I PUT a helmet on a skull,
And plumed it with a sprig of yew ;
The notion might be fanciful,
The costume scarcely true.

Perhaps it was a jolly monk,
Whose days were passed in holy peace,
Until with all that he had drunk
His girdle did increase.

Perhaps it was a country squire
Who never left his native soil,
And loved too well his own bright fire
To share a victor's spoil.

Perhaps it was a working man,
Whose constant labour day by day
Could scarce keep pace with Time, who ran
In nakedness away.

Yet still upon those arching brows
That warlike helmet shall remain ;
For if it be the ruined house
Of any human brain,

Its inmate may have strongly fought
Temptations that beset his course,
And boldly grappled evil thought
With stern and silent force.

It is a conflict where success
Attends a nature cold and strong ;
And many fail who none the less
Have fought and suffered long.

Then thus I do adorn the dead
With iron helmet plumed with yew,
In hope that once the living head
Was in resistance true.

AL JANNAT.*

WE die—I know no more—I cannot tell
 Our future fate ; but Moslem doctors say
 That after we are slain by Azraël,
 Munkar and Nakeer will arrive next day
 To catechise—and if we answer well,
 They'll leave in peaceful rest our rotten clay :
 But if we stammer like a child at fault,
 Our skulls will suffer from their rough assault.

* This poem is a fragment, complete however in itself, of a juvenile production which was left unfinished after 200 stanzas had been written and corrected. I shall not publish it in an unfinished state ; and it is, therefore, improbable that the completed cantos will ever see the light, especially since they read very like a bad imitation of Beppo. "Al Jannat" is merely a digression suggested by the death of a devout Mussulman.

We next in Berzak, or the Interval,
Shall dream dreams and see visions in our sleep ;
A rest enduring till the trump shall call ;
Till rain for forty years the earth shall steep ;
Till the sun die, and constellations fall
Into the boiling, black, and desolate deep ;
Till the whole earth become one vast death-bed,
And even till Azraël himself is dead.

Then the archangel Izrafil shall sound
The blast that calls to judgment, and each soul
Shall fly to seek its own sepulchral mound.
And then the shattered earth from pole to pole
Shall open, and the flesh shall cluster round
The whitened bones until they shall be whole,
Fit to receive the Spirit which hath come
To dwell for ever in its former home.

A motley human multitude they stand,
For Moslems, Jews, and Infidels are there ;
Ghebers and Brahmins, men of every land,
Of every creed, and every form of prayer.
And Gabriel with the balance in his hand
Shall weigh their good and evil, and declare,
With all the closeness of a practised eye,
The verdict of the scales of destiny.

Ye who have rested on some rocky ledge,
And watched the falcon darting for her prey,
Or have beheld her callows when they fledge
First cleave with fluttering wings their lofty way,
Imagine, slender as a sabre's edge,
A bridge suspended, hardly seen by day,
Where the hawks fly, flung over in the night,
And at the end a little glimmering light,

And underneath—deep Hell; and all around,
In the thronged regions of the haunted air,
Distracting terrors both of sight and sound;
And demons, mocking, asking you to share
The pains they suffer in the vast profound
Beneath you, where the fires of torture glare.
Before you shines Hope's feebly trembling star;
Beneath, Hell's fiery jaws—but Allah, far!

'T is gained at last! and on the fragrant shore
Of a broad lake yeapt the Prophet's pool,
They drink delicious draughts, and thirst no more,
And breathe sweet breezes from the water cool;
And enter in at the triumphal door
Of Paradise, to revel and to rule—
Where all the aspirations of the just
Grow real to their renovated dust.

There every man is thirty years of age,
And grows no older—pity not his heirs :
They thrive, his death would not increase their wage,
And they rejoice to see how well he wears.
John Bunyan's hard Progressive Pilgrimage
Ended not half so pleasantly as theirs,
Who have it all exactly their own way,
Harems well stocked, and banquets every day.

There Izrafil conducts the choral throng—
The Costa of their concerts—who is worth
A chorus in himself, to whom belong
Graces unknown to batons upon earth—
Graces that never lead the feelings wrong,
Nor urge the revel to unseemly mirth ;
For there forbidden joys of love and wine
Are taken under patronage divine.

Men say of worldly pleasure, " It is nought ;"
They say the joys of this brief life are vain,
Because each wrong enjoyment must be bought,
And only heaps a debt of after-pain :
And so they plan a paradise in thought—
A dreamy realm, whose gate they hope to gain
By climbing on sore knees the sacred stairs,
By self-denial, penitence, and prayers.

They cannot stoop to joys that have an end ;
They walk in sackcloth on their pilgrimage ;
But if that Allah at its close defend
Their future bodies from disease and age,
Sin's terror gone, the rigid will unbend,
And pleasures long deferred their griefs assuage,
And former self-denial be consoled
By boundless wealth and coronets of gold.

Ascetic ! thou according to thy light
Art wise ; but wise too in their generation
Are those who keep aloof from rebel fight
With their own natures, happy in their station,
And seek a healthful measure of delight ;
Nor will like thee, in hopeful aspiration,
The pleasures of this present world resign
For Hourî's eyes and rivulets of wine.

EDEN.

ONE evening at a noble's house I left
 The old Lord with his wine, and wandered forth
 Upon the lawn, between the summer trees,
 Whose hoary trunks upon the shaven green
 Cast shadows, lengthening eastward as the sun
 Shone through the lower leaves. I followed on
 A winding walk that led me through the shrubs
 Across a rustic bridge, until I came
 Into a cool and shady wilderness ;
 From which emerging on an open space,
 I looked around me, seeking anxiously,
 For there I hoped to find my mistress Eve.

It was a garden sheltered by tall woods
 On three sides of its square ; but on the fourth,
 There was a terrace broad, with balustrades
 Of sculptured stone enclosed, and all its length

Vases o'erflowed with flowers. A hedge of dew
Was all the garden's inner boundary,
A solid wall of rich and sombre green.
Against it shone fair statues. In the midst
Sprang a tall fountain from a lucid pool,
Where fish with golden scales were swimming round.
My love was walking by her fragrant beds,
Dark with the morning's rain; and when we met
She showed me all her roses, some with buds
Half-opened to the kisses of the sun.
Amongst the clusters of the full-blown flowers,
Like younger sisters in a crowd of dames,
My love was full of life and cheerfulness,
And laughing, talked about her looks and flowers:
But I was silent, for I worshipped her,
And followed closely where her garment's hem
Did consecrate the ground. At last she led
Into a temple, and before a graven —
Cupid and Psyche — there we stood and watched
Between the pillars of the portico
The sunset in the park. The time alone
Unbosed my heart, and through my fervent lips
Poured out what Love made almost eloquent.
I spoke in poems with such inner truth
As strangely broke my cold reserve of state:
I dared not look into those beaming eyes
That well I knew were looking up to mine:
But steadfastly I gazed upon the clouds

That glowed between the uplands, where the does
Stood round the sultan stag. "The sun is gone,"
She whispered ; and I drew her to a couch,
And there we sat and looked upon the pair
Whose lips were joined in one eternal kiss.
There, in the twilight, stood their lovely forms ;
And where the light foot of the maiden pressed
The plinth on which they stood, bright Hesperus
Rose trembling in the mist. Then as I spoke
About those wondrous statues and their love,
My voice grew faint and low, but passionately
I talked at last in whispers not unheard.
Then we were still and silent as that pair.
No ! for our hearts were beating—theirs were cold.
Her eyes, too, had a swimming loveliness,
Better than Psyche's white and polished orbs ;
And warm and soft was her delicious lip,
So that I think Dan Cupid envied me.

TO THE MEADOW SAFFRON.

THOU art purple with cold,
 And leafless and bare ;
 Thou layest thy head on the dark garden bed,
 And slumberest there.

All the richness of hue
 Of the summer is gone :
 Like a pale cloud at eve that the sunbeams leave,
 Thou art left alone.

'T was an old man's embrace
 That ends in thy birth ;
 For the year is grown old, and his heart faint and cold
 On thy mother, the Earth.

But sweetly thou liest
So helplessly there,
Thou needest not gold, nor the leaves that enfold
Forms not so fair.

They were rich ; thou art poor ;
Thou art fairer than they :
Thou art naked and white, my own last delight,
And I dread thy decay.

Poor beauty ! I love thee
Too truly to take
One single bright flower ; but at thy last hour
I will mourn for thy sake.

THE CONFINES OF THOUGHT.

WE cannot look before us and behind
At once ; and so the visions of the mind
Are partial in their reaching, and confined.

The spirit gives one-sided evidence
Of things that are ; but the extended sense,
Which is peculiar to Omniscience,

In its abstraction needs not to forget
Surrounding things, and has no limit set,
And in it all existences are met.

Now this reflection occupies my mind,
And if I roam the universe to find
New images, they come, but uncombined.

They come, but breaking wildly from the laws
Which chain them in existence ; and I pause
On each a moment separately, because

I am short-sighted as the honey bee,
That knows each single flower, but cannot see
A landscape, or a garden, or a tree.*

I cannot see creation as a whole ;
I look before me, but a human soul
Is backward blinder than a dim-eyed mole.

I upward gaze in fancy to the light
Of stars, but even the penetrative sight
Perceives not half the glory of the night.

It saw some paintings on the clouded dome
Of heaven, when Light adorned his royal home
With frescoes rich and borders polychrome,

But could not grasp the scope of his design ;
Saw one by one each tint and graceful line,
But had not skill those pictures to combine.

We look above, forgetting all below,
Yet under us primæval forests grow,
And there the southern constellations glow.

* The eye of the bee is microscopic from its convexity.

Cathedrals have their crypts, and Earth her graves
Of fossil kingdoms, and a tyrant paves
Whole provinces with skeletons of slaves.*

Yet we, unless by effort, never dream
Of these ; and even then the transient gleam
Of what things are soon fades to what they seem.

I tried to grasp the universe of things
At once, but vainly. Now my spirit sings
Her disappointment, and with folded wings

Reverts to themes that were her former scorn,
And walking on the earth where she was born,
Picks in the stubble scattered grains of corn.

* When these lines were written the Czar had invaded the Danubian Provinces ; and, having established martial law, was perpetrating unheard-of atrocities.

TURNER.

TURNER had strength to bear that tempering
Which makes the broken hearts of weaker men
Its daily food, and lives on shattered hopes.
He still pursued his journey step by step—
First modestly attired in quiet grey,
As well became sincere humility ;
Then with a plume of colour he adorned
His simple raiment, and so walked a while ;
Until at last, like his beloved Sun,
He set in forms of strangest phantasy,
Coloured with gold and scarlet, and the lands
Of his conception grew as dim and vague
As shadows. So his mighty brain declined.

Men have accused him of mean avarice,
Since, being rich, he lived in poverty ;

Yet had they gone and tempted him with gold
To sell the fairest children of his hand,
He would have scorned their offers, and replied :
“ These are too precious for your galleries —
They bear my spirit’s image. I bequeath
Them undivided to my country’s care.”
So in that gloomy mansion where he dwelt,
He kept those works around him till his death ;
And so denied himself, and sacrificed
More wealth by that reserve than feebler minds
Might strive a lifetime to accumulate.
Religious men have often lived from choice
In poverty, that wealth might not distract
Their souls from contemplation. It was so
With Turner the recluse, and rightly so ;
For Art is a religion, and would scorn
A soul’s divided service. I respect
The painter whom no pleasures could allure
From his serene, laborious solitude ;
Who gathered wealth for painters after him,
And only cared for Art and for his fame !
And if increasing riches could not change
His frugal habits into luxury,
Or hinder that devotion to his art
By which he had attained such excellence,
Does that degrade his character or not ?
It well contrasts with that improvidence
Which ruins Art by making its pursuit

A path whereby the debtor may escape
By trick and speed the horrors of the jail.

Turner bequeathed his riches unto Art,
And to extend his fame—a noble wish ;
And from the grave he challenged Claude Lorraine,
And still they try their prowess side by side,
Living on canvass in strange rivalry.
But you who would be judges in this cause
Must go to Nature, the great lawgiver,
And having studied her eternal code,
Give your decision without any fear
Of prejudice or withered connoisseurs.

GABRIEL RATCHETS.

“The peasants fancy the noise of the wild swans flying high in the nights to be spirits, or, as they call them here in the north, Gabriel Ratchets.”
—JOHN WEBSTER.

“WILD huntsmen?”—’T was a flight of swans,
But so invisibly they flew,
That in his mind the pallid hind
Could hear a bugle horn.
Faintly sounds the airy note,
And the deepest bay from the staghound’s throat,
Like the yelp of a cur on the air doth float ;
And hardly heard is the wild halloo
On the straggling night-breeze borne !

They fly on the blast of the forest
That whistles round the withered tree,
But where they go we may not know,
Nor see them as they fly.
With hound and horn they ride away
In the dreary twilight cold and grey,
That hovers near the dying day ;
And the peasant hears but cannot see
Those huntsmen pass him by.

Hark ! 't is the goblin of the wood,
Rushing down the dark hill-side,
With steeds that neigh and hounds that bay,
All viewless sweeps the throng.
And heavily where the fallow-deer feeds
Clatter the hoofs of their hunting steeds,
Like the mountain gale on the valley's meads ;
Till far away the spectres ride,
In distant lands along.

1849.

SELF-COMMAND.

I HAVE the pleasure now in self-command
Of one whose servants are obedient.
But formerly my weak will stood in awe
Of all its slaves, for frowning mutiny
Was brewing in the ship of my desires ;
And Intellect, a captain gagged and bound,
Was laughed at. Now he holds his rightful place,
And tacks the ship, and saves her by a word,
When she is rushing on the reefs of sin.

MARIAN.

“ Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly,
Not of the stains of her.”—THOMAS HOOD.

SHE wanders nightly through a world of streets ;
She gives a dreary smile to those she meets,
Which is not of the heart.
Her clothes are tasteful, but most comfortless ;
The cold night wind despises her thin dress ;
She plays the bitter part
Of happy love in hate and weariness.

Her wavy hair is stiff with bandoline,
And her pale, powdered forehead shows between,
Like marble dead and white ;
Her cheek has lost its bloom, but in her eyes
The colour darkens as the lustre dies ;
And, beautiful as night,
In each deep orb a weary spirit lies.

She speaks with such a sad and gentle voice
Of her sad life that is not hers from choice,
 And of her death as near,
That Virtue would not feel herself secure
To think that souls so delicate and pure
 Could live and be sincere
In hating all the guilt that they endure.

She passes down long avenues of lamps,
Robed like a virgin chastely ; but the damps
 Of many winter nights
Have their effect, and she has closely prest
Her white-gloved hands upon her little breast,
 And walks beneath the lights,
Caressing Death — by him in turn cared.

THE AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD.

'Tis cold and rainy on this winter night,
 But one whom I have known is with his flocks
 At noonday in the summer of the South.
 Before the sun the colours of the spring *
 Fade from the forest, and the odorous air
 Is heated through and through. He takes his seat
 On other earth, surrounded by strange plants.
 He slays the wild dog and the stinging snake.
 He has a rifle by him in the grass,
 Wherewith he hunts the leaping kangaroo.
 His dogs keep watch beside him. There he sleeps—
 What lies between us? All this bulky globe,

* The following is an extract from a private letter :—

“In the spring, however, England must yield the palm to Australia for beauty—as far as regards the forest, at all events; as here it is one mass of pink, yellow, violet, and white flowers, excelling in perfume all the *rondelias*, *millefleurs*, and other artificial scents ever invented.”

A chest of secrets, with a heart of fire
And crust of fossils.

When the summer night
Falls over that great island in the south
Whereon his flocks repose, the Polar Star,
Once never lost by ancient mariners
In their confined adventures on the sea,
Peers not above the horizon—lost to him
For ever; but the splendid Southern Cross,
And those two clouds which bear Magellan's name,
Two clouds of clustered stars in the clear sky,
Hang nightly, far above the winds that blow
Around our planet, changeless films of light.
And when Orion and the wandering moon
Come with familiar aspect, they remind
The exile of the land on which they shone
When he first saw them, and his earliest friends,
And hills, and streams, and meadows of his youth,
And this old gabled house where he was born.

THE FIRE ON THE MOOR.

THE sun is setting. On the hill
 A smoke-wreath clinging to the furze
 Lies in its light serene and still,
 It sleeps and never stirs.

* * * * *

The stars are out—the sun is gone ;
 Some ghastly rents of yellow light
 Are in the cloud through which he shone,
 And darkly falls the night.

The hill is dark as indigo ;
 But where the smoke at sunset lay,
 A steady light is burning slow,
 We could not see by day.

And though the vale is ten miles wide,
We see it through its cloudy wreath—
That red spot on the mountain side,
The fire upon the heath !

The hen-grouse sits upon her nest,
She starts at times with vague alarm ;
Beneath her wings her callows rest,
Their bed is soft and warm.

She hears a crackling sound—she sees
White smoke drive thickly overhead,
Like a poor savage when the trees
Burn round her children's bed.

She feels a suffocating heat,
The air grows denser—hotter still ;
The scorching flames blown off their feet
Come roaring up the hill !

One maddening moment still she clings
To that poor nest ; then with a cry
Of torture flaps her burning wings,
And leaves her brood to die.

She shoots like lightning through the cloud,
Her young ones flutter in the fire :
The night is dark—the wind is loud—
The flames are creeping higher.

DE ARGENTINE.

“COME home, come home, De Argentine,
 Let prowess find its proper use ;
 A foeman worthy swords like thine
 Is up in arms—the rebel Bruce !”

He rode to Scotland with the king,
 But all his valour could not turn
 The day against that chosen ring
 Who fought round Bruce at Bannockburn.

He left the thickest of the fight,
 And sought the king. “This fatal war,”
 Said he, “must end before to-night ;
 You will be safer at Dunbar.”

“Attend me, then, De Argentine !”
 But scorn inflamed that soldier’s eye :
 “Be safety yours, but honour mine,—
 ’Tis not my wont to fly !”

He turned his charger as before,
And so fulfilled his lofty boast ;
His silver armour, red with gore,
Was trampled by the Scottish host.¹

The silver goblets on his shield²
Ran over with a precious wine —
The blood of him who scorned to yield,
The noble blood of Argentine !³

NOTES.

¹ Sir Giles de Argentine, knt. slain in Scotland at the battel of Bannocksburne near Strivelin, in 7th Edward II. It is said, that the king himself being in that fatal battel, and seeing the danger, by the advice of this Sir Giles (who being then lately come from the wars of Henry de Luzemburg, the emperour, and reputed a stout warrior), fled to Dunbar ; and that this Sir Giles, saying he was not wont to fly, returned to the English host, and was slain.—DUGDALE.

² Arms of De Argentine,—Gules, three covered cups, argent.

³ Sir Giles was descended from the baronial family of that name.

DEAR-BOUGHT FIELD.

THERE is a field three acres in extent,
 Down in the valley, and Sir Humphrey Fort,
 Owner of all the acres hereabouts,
 Purchased that little plot a year ago
 For thrice its value. It was his before,
 But talking with the tenant of the farm
 One evening in July, he asked the man
 “How soon one scythe could mow it?” “In a day,”
 Replied the farmer, and Sir Humphrey smiled;
 Which nettled Jackson, who began to swear
 That from the rising of the morrow’s sun
 To its decline, he’d mow it all himself.
 Sir Humphrey smiled again, and promised him
 That if he did, the land should be his own.

So Jackson told his wife—a stirring dame,
 Alive to all the details of finance;

And she, perceiving that although the land
Was not itself enough to keep the house,
Its loss would make a hole in the estate
Like an unsightly moth-bite in a cloak,
Which, though consuming no great breadth of cloth,
Annoys the wearer, took the matter up
Most warmly. But her husband seemed afraid
To face the task, so she encouraged him ;
And all her words had weight ; for she had known
For many years the length of Jackson's purse
Better than he, and all her arguments
Were to the point. " ' They'd had the thinnest crop
Last year," she said, " of any since they came ;
And four good cows had sickened one by one,
And perished in the spring ; and then he lost
Five pounds by selling Jimmy at the fair
Beneath his value, when he came home drunk ;
And then they'd had some sickness in the house,
And times were bad, and he was strong enough—
A stout-built man—enough to mow a match
With any farmer on the country-side."
And then she instanced one called Jonas Lee,
Who, before breakfast one fine summer's day,
Had mown two acres—all the widow's field.
So she contrived by artful eloquence,
Addressed to love, regret, and self-esteem,
To emulation and old rivalry,
Naming by turns his losses and his faults,

His neighbour's feat, his own advantages,
To screw his resolution for the night.

The clouds were bright above the eastern hill
When Jackson left the house ; and when his hand
Shook off the dewdrops from the meadow gate,
The sun was half in sight. Then Jackson's wife,
Who'd roused him from his comfortable rest,
Took his scythe from him, and began to whet
Its edge, already sharp enough to mow
The beard upon his chin. By this the sun
Had fairly risen ; so the farmer took
The scythe himself, and bent unto his task.
She fetched another quickly from the house ;
And, if a blade of grass escaped the edge,
Made him exchange ; and in that quiet field
All that long day the scraping of the blade
Resounded. Crisp and short the mower cut,
Stoutly and well, and steady time he kept ;
And the monotonous sweeping of the scythe
Was music to the hearing of his wife.
He marched by inches, and upon his left,
The fallen swathes were heaped on one another
Like a slain army. Then into the field
His little children ran, rejoicing much
To tread again the long-forbidden ground,
And close behind him followed, to enlarge
Their liberty as quickly as they might.

But when he paused, his too ambitious wife
Looked at her blue-eyed boy, and thought aloud
How much the child might gain by that day's work.
Jackson resumed his labour, and except
Some intervals of rest begrudged and stolen
When the surveillance of his overseer
Was broken by her absence for a time
To fetch him ale—he worked like one gone mad
Till sunset.

When the sun was dropping down
Beyond the misty woods there still remained
A dozen yards to mow, and close beside
Sir Humphrey stood—a sparkle in his eye
As it received the image of the sun
Half-buried in the west—when Jackson's wife,
Who stood beside him, gave a sudden shriek,
And the strong farmer dropped his scythe and fell
Into her arms. He died upon the spot!
And some spectators who had gathered round
Lifted her senseless from the senseless corpse,
And carried both away into the house,—
The little children following by themselves.

Sir Humphrey's kindness said the match was won,
Because the sun had set behind the hill,
And not the true horizon, at the time
When Jackson died, who, had he lived it out,
Would have completed what he swore to do;

So it indeed became the widow's field.
But when the story spread about the land,
The common people said, " 'T is dearly bought,"
For she had bought it with her husband's life ;
And " dear-bought field " they call it to this day.

Sir Humphrey bought it back a year ago
For thrice its value, as poor Jackson's wife
Foresaw, to mend the hole in his estate.

NOTE.

The circumstance recorded in this poem occurred near Clapham in Craven, and the field is called "dear-bought" to this day. Jonas Lee, alluded to as having mown a field of two acres before breakfast, actually performed the feat. He was a stout, heavily-built man, above six feet high, with a pair of shoulders so broad and massive, that I have heard a yeoman compare them to "a chest of drawers." Two of the best mowers in the neighbourhood challenged him to mow the same area in a given time, *as they both could*, and entered the field to do it, but their courage failed them. He was respected as a popular preacher, since he addressed himself to the simple understandings of his audience. For example, on one occasion he took his text from an old cart-wheel which lay on the floor of the barn in which he was preaching. "The nave," said he, "is Christ—the twelve spokes the apostles;" and he hunted the simile to the death. He built a chapel, and also a barn, and round the barn a wall, every stone of which was quarried, shaped, and set in its final place by his own hand. His favourite steed was a bullock, on which he once rode through Manchester. His earnings were large, but dissipated in unfortunate speculations, such as reclaiming moorland. This remarkable man killed himself with excessive labour. He was the type of the drayhorse class of the human race, and was never happy but when undergoing the most laborious exertion. Such, at least, are the traditions prevalent concerning him.

APHORISMS.

1.

SIZE is not value ; knowledge loves to bind
Epics in nutshells—essences of mind.

2.

Swear we, in youth,
To bear with the ways
Of the world, for truth,
To the end of our days.

3.

Misfortune hopes good ;
Fortune fears evil ;
Fancies balance both,
Making luck level.

4.

England 's a house in which two mistresses —
Science and Superstition — rule together ;
The old one's very careful of the keys ;
They cannot even agree about the weather.

5.

Life's like that lady of the giant land
Whose beauty Grildrig could not understand ;
To some her breasts a bed of joy may be,
Though rough and coarse to sensitives like me.

6.

Better go barefoot than in pinching shoes,
Your feet will harden after every bruise.

7.

Laws are in force before the subject knows ;
Gain quickly, then, the knowledge they suppose.

8.

Since Nature visits ignorance as crime,
'T were best to learn her ordinance in time.

9.

There is no more unenviable state
Than that of him whose knowledge comes too late.

10.

Knowledge, our truest friend, is often sent
Too late for caution, not for punishment.

11.

Men hate your "harmless abstinence ;"
Your life gives tacit evidence
Against them, so they take offence.

12.

Most dilletants are little boys,
Whose work is play, whose tools are toys.

13.

Too old to learn — too old to live.

14.

Greatness or present peace ? Choose one, for those
Who seek for fame must sacrifice repose.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE;

OR, THE BALLAD OF SIR STEPHEN HAMERTON.

THE Church was spoiled by sacrilege,
Her shrines King Henry did deface,
When our fathers made in her defence
Their Pilgrimage of Grace.¹

When old Lord Darcy rose in arms,
And many a knight and squire rode forth
To conquer justice from the king
In the Rising of the North.

Strange palmers they, whose staffs were spears,
And suits of steel their pilgrim dress!
Their dames were left in lonely halls
To pray for their success.

Their short, sad legend, handed down
To this safe hearth from troubled times,
I would bequeath to all kind hearts
In simple ballad rhymes.

There is a tomb in our Ladye's choir,
Thereon are carved five ancient shields ;²
There is a strong, embattled tower
Amid the level fields.³

The builder of that peel is laid
Under the arch beneath the stone.
His wife and children with him rest —
He doth not sleep alone.

Sir Richard there rejoins his dame,
Though since her death he won the hand
Of the sister of that bloody lord,
Clifford of Westmoreland.⁴

But the last of the knights shall never rest
Beneath the narrow span
Of the arch in the wall of the chantry built
To our Ladye and St. Anne !

The last of those whose swords upheld
The holy Church's rights,
The last of those who died for her,
The last of the faithful knights ;

For he has passed the traitor's gate ;
And now against the ebbing tide,
The boat goes up to Westminster,
Where they must all be tried

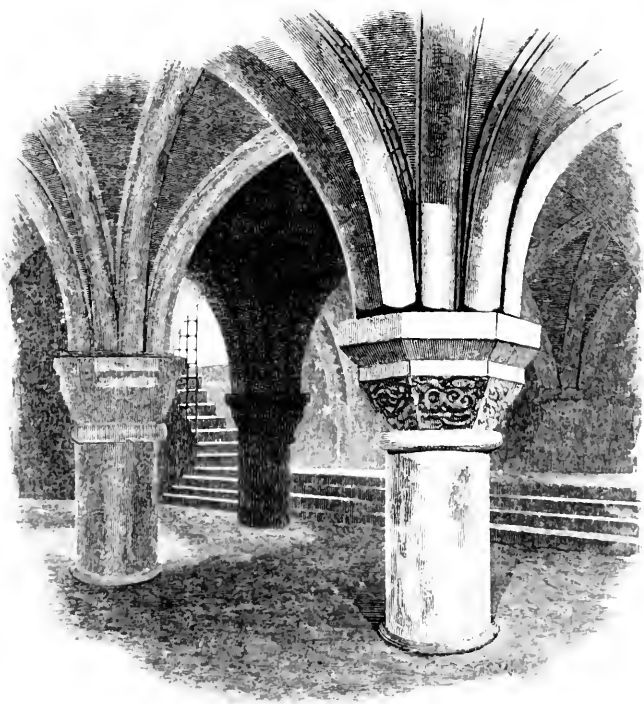
For treason against our Lord the King,
" Defender of the Faith ;"
They who defended it indeed
Must die a felon's death !

Lord Darcy's venerable head
Rose white above the crowded hall ;
Like a peak whereon the snow doth rest
It towered above them all.

Lord Hussey, too, and Percy brave,
And Constable, and Hamerton,
But nowhere with the brave esquires
Sir Stephen's only son.

Sir Stephen looked around — around —
And upward with a calm regret,
Where ranks of angels hold the shield
Of good Plantagenet.⁵

Their doom pronounced, they left the hall ;
The people groaned to hear the fate
Of that old baron, who had served
For fifty years the state.⁶



Lord Darcy died on Tower Hill,
And Lincoln ground drank noble blood ;
So fell they by the tyrant's hand
Whose lust they had withstood.

But all the knights were basely hung ;
And on the gallows, side by side,
Like thieves upon the Tyburn tree,
A felon's death they died.⁷

The very hour Sir Stephen died,
At York they tolled a funeral knell ;
Above the grave of his only son
They tolled the minster bell.⁸

The minster vaults are full of dead ;
But not a corpse lies buried there
That died a more unhappy death
Than poor Sir Stephen's heir.

Down in the crypt they used to pray
For those who slept in the vaults around ;⁹
But never more in that dark chapelle
The hymn for the dead shall sound !

And when they buried the broken heart,
Coldly above him the grave did close ;
And coldly the priests looked on, and none
Would pray for his soul's repose.

His little orphan Margaret
Lived on.¹⁰ In peace her lot was cast.
She lived till Time had slowly healed
The sorrows of the past.

Thus ended that rash enterprise,
The famous Rising in the North.
Alas ! it was a luckless day
Our ancestors rode forth.

The minster vaults are full of dead ;
But not a corpse lies buried there
That died a more unhappy death
Than poor Sir Stephen's heir.—

Heir of a traitor's tainted blood,
Heir of a forfeited estate,¹¹
A ruined house — a broken heart —
A melancholy fate !

NOTES.

¹ The narrative of this ballad is simply historical, and nothing is overstated or arranged for effect. The Great Northern Insurrection was called "The Pilgrimage of Grace" by its adherents.

The ballad is written from a Roman Catholic point of view. We ought not to judge the actions of religious men from the outside, as they appear to us ; but from the inside, as they appeared to themselves.

Three risings are recorded by Hollinshed. The first was an important one. The insurgent army mustered 40,000 men, well-appointed, "with captains, horssees, armor, and artillerie." The rebels encamped near Doncaster, where they were met by the royal forces under the Duke of Norfolk. The two armies were prevented from engaging by a sudden overflow of the River Don, (not an uncommon occurrence there at the present day). Afterwards the king pardoned the ringleaders, and the insurgents dispersed.

The second rising was excited by Sir Francis Bigod of Settrington, Yorkshire, in February 1537. It began in his own neighbourhood, extending to the east coast at Scarborough ; but was soon suppressed, and Sir Francis himself imprisoned in the Tower.

The third rising took place later in the same year. Its chiefs were Lord Darcy, Sir Robert Constable, Sir John

Bulwer, Sir Thomas Percy (a brother of the Earl of Northumberland), Sir Stephen Hamerton (brother-in-law to Sir Francis Bigod), Robert Aske, and others. They were all brought to the Tower, attainted, and executed.

² The chantry of our Ladye and St. Anne in Long-Preston church.

³ Hellifield Peel, built by Laurence Hamerton, who obtained a license from the king to fortify it about 1440.

⁴ Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Lord Clifford and Westmoreland, sister of John the bloody Lord Clifford, slain at Towton Field, and relict of William Plumpton. (See "Plumpton Correspondence," published by the Camden Society.)

⁵ The hammer-beams in Westminster Hall are carved with large angels holding the shield of Plantagenet.

⁶ Lord Darcy was eighty years old at his trial, and had served the state in various high capacities for half a century. His death was deeply felt by the people.

⁷ Dodsworth uses the word *decapitatus*. Other authorities assert that Sir Stephen and his companions were hung at Tyburn.

⁸ "He left an only son, Henry, who is said by Dodsworth to have been interred in M. (qu. Monasterio or Minster ?) de Ebor, die quo pater ejus decapitatus est." It is not improbable that he died of a broken heart in consequence of the ruin of his family."—Dr. WHITAKER'S *History of Craven*.

⁹ The Crypt of York Minster was used for masses for the dead until the Reformation.

¹⁰ Margaret, daughter of Henry Hamerton, survived him and married.

¹¹ A list of Sir Stephen's manors will be found in Whitaker's *Craven*.

THE PALACE AND ITS INSCRIPTION.

A REMINISCENCE OF CHATSWORTH.

ÆDES HAS PATERNAS DILECTISSIMAS
ANNO LIBERTATIS ANGLICÆ MDCLXXXVIII INSTITVTAS
GVL. S. DEVONLE DVX ANNO MDCCCXI HÆRES ACCEPIT
ANNO MÆRORIS SVI MDCCCXL PERFECIT.

Inscription at Chatsworth.

SORROW and Death—unwelcome everywhere—
Enter all houses. 'Tis an ancient theme.

One glorious day in summer we drove down
To Haddon—thence to Chatsworth. We were like
The seven sleepers at the modern gates
Of Ephesus when we stood waiting there
Under the arch before the gilded gate,
For we had rambled through the galleries
And empty chambers of the olden time,
Until our minds had also grown antique.

The gate was opened, and we found ourselves
Before a modern palace. Level lawns
By acres—fountains glistening in the sun

Like minarets of silver—beds of flowers
Burning with dazzling scarlet and bright gold,
Or azure as the blue, clear, summer sky ;
And here and there so white and beautiful,
Naked and cool beneath the noon-day sun,
A lovely statue. Sauntering round the walks,
We came at length into a spacious square
Bordered with flaming flowers, intensely bright,
Like lines of fire, and covering all the square,
Rose a great hall of crystal ; entering which,
We found ourselves transported far away
To tropic climes. The air was warm and still,
Perfumed with blossoming trees. In groves of palm
We wandered ; and above us spreading leaves
Hung gracefully—kind Nature's parasols,
Like those of dark green silk which menials bear
To shade the sacred heads of eastern kings :
And bending ferns, not like the bracken plants
That nestle in inhospitable crags
About our lakes and streams, but noble trees,
Plumed with large fronds that droop with languid heat.
And there were citron trees, and cinnamon,
Olives, and many natives of the East,
Whose names in sacred scriptures and old tales
Of Cairo are familiar to our ears.
And over all this grove an arch of glass
Rose to a lofty height, and interposed
Between those trees and our inclement sky

A bright, transparent shelter. Hence our Prince,
When he collected from remotest climes
The treasures of their richest merchandise,
Built a great fabric in the public park
After this model ; in whose crystal halls
We wandered in the happy times of Peace.

We left the palms ; and having crossed the lawn,
Entered the palace by an orange grove,
Whose golden fruit by contrast with the green
Shone out so richly that we quite forgot
Its cheap complexion. Thence into a hall
Of sculpture, by a door whose pillars were
Great shafts of yellow jasper. From above,
On forms of beauty, fell the dazzling noon,
Such forms of strength and beauty ! Oh to be
A giant like the one who holds the quoit,
Alive and strong ! to have such godlike limbs,
And see Thorwaldsen's Venus start to life,
And leave her marble pedestal, and fly
With naked feet across the level lawn
Before you — then indeed these gardens were
A second Eden ! This colossal bust
Recalls us to our world of strife and blood ;
Thought sits enthroned on its tremendous brow,
Not meditation nor the poet's dream.
That brow was a white tent ; within were held
Councils of war — there swift decisions came

That tossed about the crowns of Christendom,
Which were his playthings. Here's another bust—
It is our foe, the Autocrat, whose power
We need not now disparage as we did,
For he is dead, and deaf to all reproach.
Well! it was nobler to contend with him,
For France and England, than to practise war
On poor barbarians like those Algerines
Whom she invaded, or the wretched hordes
We slaughtered on the plains of Hindostan.
Strange than our stricken foe, this Nicholas,
For whom no name is foul or base enough
In our ignoble and unworthy rage—
This Northern Bear—this chief of savages—
Stayed here—beneath this roof—some years ago,
A pleased and cheerful guest. His noble host,
They said, had turned his portrait to the wall.
They said it falsely, and they libelled him!
The generous Duke can treat his royal foe
More nobly. He had eaten of his salt.

This is the temple of departed gods
Whose influence haunts us yet. A thousand years
Build up a mythic creed; but nought on earth
Is so tenacious of its parting life;
It clings and clings about the souls of men,
No force can shake it off. It holds its place
In fancy after faith and reverence die,

And lives in verse and sculpture. Come away
To the fair temple of a younger faith,
Still having vital functions in the world.

'T is wainscoted with cedar, richly carved,
Or purest alabaster. Faith and Hope
Stand by the altar — these are common virtues ;
Rarer and brighter far is Charity.
It is a lovely chapel ! Here one might
Yield to those sweet illusions that unnerve
Heroic strength of thought, and steal away
All that is left to us of manliness
For our eternal strivings after truth ;
But I, whose dreams are of the Infinite,
Love better far the vastness out of doors.
Christ rarely taught in synagogues. He sought
Lake, desert, mountain, there to meditate.
I hold the arts most precious ; yet I doubt
If they assist devotion like God's works.
It was no erring instinct that compelled
Old anchorites to leave such lovely shrines
As this, and dwell alone amongst the hills
With Nature and the scripted works of God.

We passed along through galleries of art
To the state rooms — a lofty, noble suite
Of chambers, built a hundred years ago,
Now scarcely used. We passed from room to room :

In one were royal thrones, on which were crowned
Sovereigns of England — rooms most richly hung
With leather stamped and gilt, or lined with oak
That blossomed into garlands at the doors.

Then standing at a window, as I looked
On the tall fountains and the distant pools,
Rich woods and swelling uplands in the park,
And a bright river with a herd of deer
Upon its bank reposing in the sun,
I yielded to illusions, thinking thus :

*Sorrow and pain (I thought) can never come
To such a perfect paradise as this.*

We passed along, descending to a hall
Of precious marbles, and therein I read
A brief inscription that dispelled my dream.

It told me in its simple Latin phrase
That those fair buildings, which I thought secure
Against the siege of sorrow, had at last
Been finished—but the builder tells you there
That they were finished in a year of grief.

So we begin our earthly palaces,
Our mighty works of industry and thought,
Buoyant with hope, and finish them in sorrow.

UNFORGOTTEN.

OLD friend, it grieved me to remember you,—
For, as the inmates of a darkened house
Conceal the portrait of the newly dead,
So had I veiled your image in my heart
Through dread of grief renewed by memory.
But now, sweet image, I uncurtain thee ;
And I desire thee, beautiful as life,
To look upon me in my daily work.
Be with me in the future, thou unchanged
By any harsh vicissitude of time.
Be with me in the beauty of thy youth,
As still and silent as the miniature
A lover wears on his divided heart,
Whose loveliness is never marked by age,
Whose eyes will not grow dim on ivory.

I shared the womb with none, yet we were twins ;

My mother kissed her firstborn and then died ;
Yet we were brothers — age had made us twins,
And we were boys together. Though our tastes,
Our creeds, and our pursuits, were not the same,
Still in the languor of his failing health,
The calmness of affection undisturbed,
Unshaken by the certainty of death,
There was sublimity in unison
With my exalted welcoming of change
That fears no future — trusts eternity ;
And having witnessed just enough to know
That God is good and merciful, confides
The rest to Him. He had a feeble hold
On life ; and often in our intercourse,
His careless grasp and my unbounded trust
Seemed to our love a common sentiment.
I hoped he might recover when we parted.
I left him dreaming we might meet again. *
He tried to smile at some forced jest of mine,
And so we parted. Then his weariness
Sought rest upon his pillow, and desired
Profounder sleep than any Life affords ;
And soon they laid him, white and beautiful,
Within a coffin which affection lined
And pillowed with the luxury of death.

He was not guilty of ingratitude,
And yet to his perception all the joys

That he had known did not outweigh his pain.
And thence he did conceive without despair
Grief that his life was useless to the world,
And strange regret that he was ever born.
Perhaps the peaceful shore of Acheron
Is but that silent land from which at birth
We sailed on troubled waters, to return
After a toilsome day like fishermen ;
Or, to escape the tempests of our noon,
Retreat like him before the day is done.

MY OWN VIOLIN.

I wish that all that eloquence
 Of accent, and that strength of tone
 Which shadows little moods of mine,
 Might tell some story of thine own ;
 For in this twilight summer eve
 I'd hear with patience, once again,
 The history of the hundred years
 Of thy companionship with men.

How many hands have grasped thee thus !
 How many chins have rested there !
 Perhaps some bearded Tyrolese
 First wore thy varnished surface bare,
 When round him village dancers flew,
 And blessed the vigour of his bow :
 That secret kept the whispered things
 Which only lovers ought to know.

Why didst thou leave thy happy friends
To seek a home across the seas?
Why come to London in thy youth,
And leave that simple Tyrolese?
Perhaps thy master in distress
Surrendered thee to pay his rent,
And often in his silent house
Did afterwards thy loss lament.

With what disgust thy conscience true
Recoiled beneath the dealer's touch,
Who pasted in thy truthful breast
A label—he'd a hundred such:
A dirty label, with a date
Accounting falsely of thy birth,
He gave thee, and then sent thee forth
A guiltless liar on the earth!¹

I think I see a connoisseur,
With powdered wig and eager eyes,
Read through the hole that dingy scrap
Of Latin—clutch thee as a prize;
And take thee home, afraid to tell
His wife the foolish price he gave,
And call thee first a borrowed thing,
And introduce thee with a stave.

Old friend ! canst thou remember still
The amateurs that used to meet
To spend the evening once a-week
At his quartetts in Percy Street ?
The notes thy happy master skipped,
Yet never rested long enough —
The discords — undetected still —
The little intervals for snuff ?

The frequent errors — hot disputes —
When all know “there is something wrong,”
But none with certainty can tell
To whom the missing bars belong :
“Repeat the passage !” — thus at last
Are such contentions settled best ;
Then woe be to the careless wight,
Who, being warned, forgets to rest !

Obscure as are the sixty years
That make the season of thy youth,
The haze of distance disappears,
And fiction hardens into truth.
I know the creditable place
Wherein, some fifty years ago,
My fiddle lodged — ’t is no disgrace,
It matters not — the world may know.

Thou hadst some odd companions then :—

A brace of pistols primed with rust ;
A trumpet, blown the Lord knows when,
Whose tarnished mouth was full of dust ;
Some pinchbeck seals, and watches too,
That slept in ignorance of time ;
Old clothes that looked as good as new ;
And flutes and fiddles in their prime.

There didst thou lie, and every day

Thy soul went further out of tune ;
A straggling sunbeam tried to play
With thy loose strings, perhaps, at noon.
And some looked in upon thy rest,
Of those who long but cannot buy,
To whom the resin on thy breast
Was fallen rain of melody.²

A useless and unmeaning form,

A silent chamber of decay,
A coffin bored by many a worm,
Wherein the corse of music lay ;
Thy brown complexion must have grown
Familiar to the passers-by,
Like faces we have always known,
And nodded to, we know not why.

There came a student, music-mad,
Who was not famed for avarice,
Yet, sorely tempted in his heart,
Demurred a little at the price.
His offer was refused with scorn;
It wounded what a villain calls
His "self-respect,"—the student hied
Abruptly from the golden balls.

He was not like a full balloon
Which gases for an hour inflate,
Or stones that tumble from the moon,
And yet to earth must gravitate.³
Like any comet in its course,
He held his own erratic way;
The golden planets had not force
To draw him back again to pay.

But, with the fiddle in his hand,
The man ran after, all unmasked;
" 'T was his mistake; the price was marked
At"—just a third of what he asked.
The fiddle, like a *chapeau bras*,
Is carried caseless through the streets;
Its owner cannot choose but see
A smile on every face he meets.

To Christchurch went the happy pair,
But his devotion time will prove ;
The honeymoon of practice passed,
And she had rivals in his love :
For he, like Solomon, whose verse
The error of his life repents,
Kept—to divide his precious time—
A harem of sweet instruments.

I saw them after forty years ;
He had a living in the north.
I read with him. His violin
Was in disgrace—“ What *is* it worth ?”
I loved the fiddle more than Greek,
And told him fairly what I thought :
“ Exactly what I gave,” he said ;
And once again ’t was sold and bought.

So I secured it. Happy chance !
Another week it might have been
Dissected to improve the tone,
And washed—but not in Hippocrène.
Old friend ! I much admire your skill,
Although it is a dangerous art,
And deadly to your patients—so
Forgive me if I take their part.

Yes, I have seen them on the floor,
Back, neck, and sides—a sickening sight,
Like limbs about a surgeon's tent
After a battle. Some in white,⁴
Screwed up with little wooden cramps
To fasten the rebellious blocks,
And others bound with cruel boards,
Like drunken wretches in the stocks.

But thou, dear instrument, art mine ;
So slumber in thy padded case
Secure from all empiric hands,
And safe from dealers and disgrace :
From broker's shop and tavern brawl,
And resined bows that rudely scrape,
And learned hands that inly itch
To screw thy features out of shape.

Rest there in comfort. Whilst I live,
Discourse, at even, music sweet ;
Through thee my soul has interviews
With spirits that I love to meet
In airy palaces of sound
Which they have built and left behind,
And which they haunt, and where I dwell
In high companionship of mind.

Rest there in comfort. Leave thy bed
At times for my familiar grasp ;
I bend mine ear towards thy strings,
Thy slender neck my fingers clasp.
We are old friends of many years,
We know each other's humours well ;
I blamed thee not when strings were false,
Nor when the loosened soundpost fell.

In swift and stirring overture,
In chorus with great companies
Of voices, trumpets, violins,
Surviving when their thunder dies ;
In private chambers, where we took
A part in some divine quartett,
We have been, and we hope to be
In many such together yet.

Sing sweetly when the softer notes,
By gentle fingers touched, sustain
The harmonies thou canst not build,
The chords thou wouldst attempt in vain.
Be grateful when her music hides
The simple poverty of thine ;
But, rich in feeling, in return
Give life and vigour more divine.

Reply to *her* with notes of love,
When she speaks softly from the heart ;
And whisper sweetly all I feel,
And act for me a lover's part.
Be playful with her playfulness,
And sadden into minor keys
When she is sad ; at other times
Let all thine effort be to please.

I wish that all that eloquence
Of accent, and that strength of tone,
Which shadows little moods of mine,
Might tell some story of thine own ;
For in this twilight summer eve,
I'd hear with patience once again
The history of the hundred years
Of thy companionship with men.

NOTES.

¹ It was customary with certain dishonest dealers of the last century to paste a printed label on the inside of the back under the bass \int hole. That in my own instrument is as follows: "Jacobus Steiner, in Absam, prope Enipontium, 1683." In the true Steiners, the label, when it occurs, is written, not printed; a peculiarity which the manufacturers of the counterfeit article have been simple enough to overlook.

² I may observe, that amongst the innumerable quackeries which have possessed the fiddling world, one of the most prevalent has been the belief that the belly of the instrument was benefited by a thick deposit of powdered resin and dust. Since there have been minds original enough to advocate a similar layer of filth on the surface of our own bodies, there is, perhaps, nothing surprising in the wide popularity of this delusion.

³ My poem on *Aërolites* will prove that this allusion to an exploded theory was not made in ignorance.

⁴ The colour of a violin is produced by staining. Before this application the instrument is technically said to be "in the white."

THE TEACHERS.

ALL the world is written over
 Like the temples of the East,
 And the meaning to discover
 Needs no educated priest.

While the Pharisees were preaching
 In the synagogues of old,
 Jesus in the cornfields teaching,
 Truths to his disciples told ;

Such as every field and river
 Still revealeth to the wise ;
 Such the birds shall sing for ever ;
 Such the planets symbolise.

You are full of doubt and trouble—
 Life, you fear, may end in dust :
 Mark the insect and the bubble,
 Learn of them a better trust ;

For the mayfly glances brightly,
Poised between the trout and sun ;
And the bubbles, builded lightly,
Bravely to destruction run.

Gentle lilies, such as Jesus
Praised for their sweet carelessness,
Would have lost all power to please us
If their confidence were less.

Innocence is brave and fearless,
Living on in truth and peace,
Full of trust—sublimely careless
Whether life extend or cease.

If extending, we are grateful ;
If cut off, 't is only rest :
Nothing Nature does is hateful ;
God deals kindly with his guest.

Time flies swiftly in his palace,
Swiftly in his universe !
Years might make our spirits callous—
Death is not a tyrant's curse.

Therefore, for a little season,
Creatures here lead happy lives ;
All days end, and sober Reason
Welcomes night when it arrives.

SINGING WITH CONSTANTIA.

Our voices mingle, and the waves of sound,
 Whereon they float away,
 Our secret thoughts in one emotion bound
 To envious ears convey.

And thus the sounds our concord did create
 Are wedded evermore,
 Even as our hearts—which none shall separate
 Till life itself be o'er.

Are we not bound together like the notes
 Of our own harmony?
 Like hues in opal, or the cloud that floats
 Alone in that cold sky?

We see the Sun of Love, and glow with seeing,
 As that rich vapour does;
 And as those leaden clouds to that bright being,
 Our hearers are to us.

Our music dies serenely in the distance,
Yet even decay endears ;
So let us end, my love, our own existence
In the far future years.

Our love is music, and our death shall be
As when our own songs cease —
Inaudible, yet still a harmony —
The harmony of peace.

My lonely voice sings its divided part,
A most imperfect song,
Half of a perfect whole ; and my poor heart
To thine doth so belong.

But I have heard that sympathy can bind
With such a lengthened chain,
That mind may act in unison with mind,
Till both unite again.

Though dreary leagues of distance lie between,
There are electric wires
Of silent thought, by which we hold unseen
The converse love requires.

THE DYING STUDENT.

OCTOBER found an humble-bee half dead ;
 On the white flox he made his dying bed ;
 And its five-petalled flowers,
 Like clustered stars, hung over him unheeded.
 Alas ! their honey was no longer needed
 In the poor bee's last hours !
 His movements, languid when the day was bright,
 Became still feebler with the evening light ;
 And his exhausted powers
 Sank into perfect helplessness ere night.

And thus, surrounded by his dearest books,
 Along his shelves the student coldly looks ;
 His eye is unaware
 Of those he loved, for all are now the same.
 It passes by each unremembered name,
 And never settles there.
 The summer time of diligence is past,
 His brain benumbed, his memory overcast ;
 And Winter, cold and bare,
 Will take away his very life at last !

THE BATH.

UPON a daisied sward I sank
And slept. There mingled in my dream
The music of a flowing stream,
And hum of bees upon the bank.

A voice upon my fancies broke ;
A dripping figure at my side
Disturbed me, and my tongue replied
Before my sleeping brain awoke.

“Leave me alone, and let me rest ;
My couch is in a shady spot,
The stream is low, the sun is hot,
My heart is languid in my breast.”

He railed at me for childish fears ;
I stripped and dived in boyish pride,
I saw the pebbles magnified,
The water sounded in my ears.

Then springing up by him unseen —
My limbs renewed in strength and life,—
I clasped him in athletic strife,
And laughed and wrestled on the green.

A HOUSE OF PRAYER.

THE morning came, the day of holy rest,
By some held sacred unto idleness
And all inactive pleasures. Long before
The village bells were sounding on the hills,
Or the strong peal beneath the city spire
Rang out its music through the quiet streets,
The Poet trampled meadows thick with grass,
A second crop, all white with glistening dew ;
And soon approaching through the sloping fields
The rivulet he loved, against an oak
Leaned and looked down upon its rocky bed.

In a damp dell, through crowds of water plants
Shaded with alder — trees indigenous,
Wandered the streamlet down amid the fern ;
And from a deep pool rose an island rock,
Carved in and out with hollows dark and smooth,

Worn by the floods, and crowned with golden moss.
About its base 't was black and slippery,
Stained by the water ; but upon the top
A table land of white and bleachèd stone,
Dappled with shadows of the alder leaves.

A slender ash was rooted in the bank,
And lightly reared its head against the blue ;
The sun illumined all its silvery bark ;
And when a gust gave motion to the branches,
The shadows likewise moved their sable bars.
Its trunk was clothed with ivy so profuse,
That from its root hung down the delicate spray,
And waved above the stream its palest leaves,
Which on a wall of rock all overlaid
With spreading fingers of adhesive lichen,
Threw angular shadows, black and interlaced
With mazy lines. The long grass, red and sere,
Was deeply fringed with rich autumnal gold.
Then he descended to the water's brink,
And looking up the stream, beheld a pool
Of deep, rich brown ; and at its shallow marge
The stones were rising almost to the surface
With topaz gleams. A tower of rock behind —
The same we had a glimpse of from above,
Black round its base, but turreted with moss
And grassy tufts, sprinkled with fallen leaves,
Arose between him and a waterfall,

Whose silvery spray shoots upward to the light
And ceases not, as if each falling drop
Were met by some strong buffet where it fell,
And never finding rest, hurled up again
For ever. Down the dark pool bubbles float,
Indwelt by little angels of the sun !
Behind is perfect blackness — shade so deep,
That every insect glancing in that void
Carries a light upon its glassy wings ;
And you may trace each line of gossamer
Festooned among the boughs that glitter white,
And hang their polished leaves against the depth
Of empty shade. Above the builded walls
Of Nature's rough and untaught masonry,
The ash-trees and the alders made a roof
Of rich transparent green, whose intricate ribs
Were shapely branches intertwined, and bossed
With nests of birds, whose pillars were round trunks,
Whiter than marble in the morning light.

So unto this fair oratory came
The child to pray for guidance, using nought
Of ancient form. He bent no idle knee ;
But looking first around him till his mind
Was permeate and luminous with the rays
Of heaven, as was that pure and joyful stream,
His heart became a fount of thankfulness.

SKATING SONG.

THE lake is frozen bright and clear,
A mirror for the isles ;
We skim the surface of the mere,
And never count the miles.
The sun behind the snowy hill
Sank down an hour ago ;
The moon has found us gliding still,
As she clambers up the snow.

The golden ways are not so bright
That angels' feet entice,
As our receding path of light
Along the sounding ice.
The lake is like a polished floor
Whereon the moonbeams play,
That lure us on, but evermore
Glitter and glide away.

They pile the Christmas logs at home,
And shiver by the fire ;
But as for heat, the boys that roam
Find more than they require.
We dress as lightly as we may,
For us no hearth is bright ;
The low sun warms us not by day,
Nor the naked moon by night.

The prairie has no swifter steed
Than skates of narrow steel ;
And highbred coursers when they bleed
Beneath a jockey's heel,
Leave not the ground behind them so,
And not so swiftly move,
As we with this cold ice below,
And colder stars above !

SKATING BEFORE THE WIND.

“ LOOK down — the ice streams under us ;
This is a frightful speed ! ”

My friend looked down, but not for long,
And said, “ It is, indeed.”

The slippery ice streamed under us,
The ice so green and clear,
It seemed like water calm and deep
In the middle of the mere.

The roaring wind came after us ;
And the rain-clouds in the sky,
Which, torn and scattered far and wide,
Were rolling heavily.
Our cloaks were like the sails of ships
Which the stormy tempest fills,
And, changing quickly, we could see
The outlines of the hills.

We left upon the dark-green ice
 A track so faint and light,
It seemed as if we scarcely touched
 Its surface in our flight.
A long white curve at every stroke,
 A true and perfect line,
It seemed as if those mighty arcs
 Were part of some design

Traced swiftly on the tablet bright
 Of that hard-frozen lake,
With those great golden compasses
 That mighty angels take
To draw the orbits of the stars,
 And mark their paths in space,
Or rainbows bright, or halos dim
 About the moon's sweet face.

SLEDGING IN LANCASHIRE.*

THE sun has set an hour ago,
The week is done, the wheels are still;
And out into the frosty air
The hands come pouring from the mill;
And little boys, with clattering noise,
Run straightway to the snowy hill.

The town lies nestled in the vale;
And every night in the week but two
The sun sets in a cloud of smoke,
And grimly shows his red face through;
And those five nights long rows of lights
Burn with a flame of golden hue.

* The sledge used is a board just large enough to sit upon, with a pair of iron skates under it. The distance accomplished by one impetus I found to be 500 yards.

But now the mills are dark and cold,
The doors are shut, the hands are paid,
And, revelling in this purer air,
We meet a thousand serfs of trade ;
But you may trace on every face
The signs that mark the meaner grade.

'T is eight o'clock—the moon is bright,
And in the lane upon the snow,
The shadows of the leafless trees
With her gleamings come and go.
The vale is deep—the hill is steep—
The great town spreads itself below.

We climb the hill. A rumbling sound
Is faintly audible above :
'T is louder—nearer—here they come,
And mark the snow with many a groove !
Each factory boy may well enjoy
The pastime that I used to love.

You hear the rumbling sound again—
Beneath the shadow of the trees
Sparks fly—the rapid railway cars
Are not more madly swift than these !
Down, down they flit, and those who sit
Upon them no spectator sees.

You hear a rush and feel the wind,
And past you at a fearful pace
A dusky shadow skims the ground,
You cannot see its form or face ;
On a little seat, with lifted feet
And head thrown back, he leads the race.

Another and another pass
In swift procession. Down they go ;
Some standing firm with arms outspread
Like wings, and some reclining low.
No earthly steed could match their speed ;
The only rivals that they know
Are their shadows on the snow.

PARABLE OF THE STREAM.

I AM a priest of Nature, and I preach
From texts extracted from her sacred book.
I saw a river on a summer's day
Of clean and peaceful water, which passed by
Rude crags and threatening boughs with fearless heart,
Unconscious of their shadows ; and it flowed
With calm unbroken current over rocks,
And polished every sharp impediment
By the effect of its own gentleness.
It was a cheerful brook, and musical,
And all the light was welcome that the sun
Would pour into its clear and open breast.
I came again in autumn, and the mud
Defiled that troubled river with a hue
Of dark and sullen gloom. It was opaque,
And full of filthy secrets, which it nursed
With a morose and grumbling discontent.

The water was so thick that the strong shadows,
No longer drowned in its transparent depth,
Played on the surface all the afternoon.
It groaned with torture on the pebbly marge,
And foamed and bruised itself upon the rocks
Like worshippers of false and cruel gods.

Hear me. That river was a human soul,
That flowed past dangers and accursed things,
And griefs and darkening sorrows, with a song
And a clean breast all full of holy light.
But when its current was made foul by sin,
All things were turned to torture, and its course
Became a gauntlet through the files of hell ;
And its poor back was striped with many shadows ;
And all the objects it caressed before
Became impediments and hindrances.

I came again in winter. All the stream
Was frozen. Every ripple of the pool
Had died away, and chill and changeless ice
Locked the cold waters. From the leafless trees
There came no music—all the birds were dumb—
And not a ray of sunshine pierced the cloud—
The one great cloud that covered the expanse,
Without a rent. The earth was shut from heaven ;
The water from its playmate the wild wind ;
The withered herbage shrouded up in snow.





It was the end ! And so at last we lie,
After our chequered course through sun and shade,
Clear in the sunshine of our innocence,
Muddy and foul in sin,—until at last,
So are we darkly confined from the world,
Withered like rotten grass beneath the snow,
Cold as imprisoned waters under ice,
Silent as songless trees—frail skeletons,
Shorn of our beautiful flesh as they of leaves.

TO B. H.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

My passionate love of nature and of truth
 Has made me over-wise ;
 Yet I had pleasant dreams in early youth,
 Which you will realise.

I love too well the free, exciting search
 Of God's own scripted works
 To be a priest in any human church,
 Where doubt obscurely lurks.

And yet I know that all things are of God,
 By whom all things are made—
 Dark cloisters which monastic feet have trod,
 And sunny forest glade ;

And that the sacred office you will bear,
 And that your churches, dim
 To eyes accustomed to the outer air,
 Were all ordained by Him.

And so I wish you heartily success
In all that you desire,
A long career of happy usefulness—
One cannot look much higher !

I see you in your surplice, snowy white,
Within the altar-rail ;
Or in the pulpit, teaching what is right ;
And may your words prevail !

Let all your doctrine be sincere and kind ;
Let hate and bitterness
Dwell neither on your lips nor in your mind,
And curse not—only bless.

We cannot judge each other. Force and fear
Condemn, but cannot prove ;
But of your order some we all revere,
Whom all good men may love.

You will be like them—I can freely trust
Your human nature here ;
You will be good and gentle, and you must,
Because you are sincere.

Your life has been consistent with its aim ;
Your youth so chaste and pure,
That Love will light you with his brightest flame
To where he dwells secure.

Some maiden will forget her gilded book,
And often lose her place,
To wander towards the reading-desk, and look
For doctrine in your face.

And she will think the freshness of your skin,
And your pale golden hair,
Signs that an angel-spirit dwells within
A house so clean and fair.

And may she be, my dear old friend, to you
A true and faithful wife—
A sweet companion on the journey through
The sunny lands of life!

A LONDON STUDIO.

THEY who love Nature best surround themselves
With objects that recall her to the mind ;
And in great cities you will often meet
Some treasured relic, an imprisoned thrush,
Or, with their roots in water, hyacinths
Flowering in narrow windows to the sun.
But in an artist's painting-room, to aid
His memories of fair landscapes far away,
When by oppressive gaslight in the fogs
Of winter he must labour for his bread,
You see such relics most. A creeping plant
Hangs on the gaspipe—once above a stream
It drank the ceaseless dew of scattering spray.
Between the quaint old ceiling and the floor
A falcon hangs suspended by a thread,
A scarecrow blind and shrunken—not the same
As when he used to hover in the wind,

With wings outspread and quivering, and keen eye
That watched the fields below, where not a mouse
Could leave its hole and live. A heron, too,
As sadly changed, is on the mantelpiece,
Dusty and foul—poor thing, it bathes no more
Its grey, fine plumage, in the lonely pools
It used to haunt! Beneath its terrible beak
A dim and broken snakeskin, badly stuffed,
Lies stiffly coiled—how altered since it clothed
A lithe and supple creature with a garb
Of gleaming silver!

HADDON HALL.

THERE is an air about these terraces
 Of long neglect and absence. Since the yews
 Rejoiced to gain their natural liberty,
 And stretched their arms across the garden beds,
 And shaking hands, forgot the cruel shears,
 A hundred years have passed ; and I rejoice
 With them ; and walking here in pleasant shade,
 Through which the sunshine falls in scattered spots
 Upon the mossy walks, congratulate
 These ancient brethren that unnatural customs
 Which man delights in now no longer mar
 Their fair proportions.

With their sheddings tinged,

The beds are full of weeds, whose humble beauty
 Adorns waste places. In abundance here
 Are primroses and wild anemones,
 That ask no tending from a human hand,

For God himself regards them ; and I think
We need not wish these gardens as they were,
With yews all clipped and tortured, and square beds
Bordered with chiselled stones. See how the roots
Of the old trees have burst their narrow bounds,
And kicked away the stones with scornful feet !

Dark are the fifteen yews — fifteen are they,
And two poor trees besides, unkindly thrust
Behind an oaken summer-house, whose frame
Mars their free growth and parts them from the rest.
Dark are the yews, but, like a hill of snow,
Behind them towers a noble cherry-tree,
Covered with blossom ; and still farther back,
The highest terrace with its avenue
Of planes, whose fresh and bright unsullied green
Contrasts as strongly with the sombre yews.
And even those old stones about the roots
Are an intense light green that dazzles you.
So well does Nature study to display
Her scale of colour, from a depth of gloom
Rich, shadowy, grave, and dark as ebony,
To brilliant leafage, whose transparent structure
Colours the golden sunbeams falling through.

Next to the yews I love the balustrade,
With lichen-blotted spheres at intervals,
And little arches. It adapts itself

With ease to change of level in the slope
Of the broad flight of gentle, shallow stairs,
Descending with them to the garden square.
Its spheres and arches seen betwixt the yews,
Lead the eye onward to the hall itself;
And then it wanders down the garden front
From oriel to ivied oriel,
Down to the chapel window, where it rests,
A traceried window, beautiful, half-seen.

This garden is a platform well sustained
By buttresses of masonry. Below,
The river waters many noble trees,
Passing beneath the arches of a bridge—
A little two-arched bridge, whose narrow path
Two horsemen could not ride upon abreast.
Down to this bridge from the high table-land
Whereon the spacious quadrangles are built,
Long flights of stairs descend—old mossy stairs.

The silent chapel is all grey within;
Its gilded mouldings have a yellower tint
Than the plain oak itself—but nothing more.
The windows still retain some painted glass,
Coloured with gold, and delicately drawn:
But in one night, some years ago, there came
Vile thieves, who stole the rest of it away,
And only left these fragments—so I look

On the cold, cheerless panes, with bitter thoughts,
Mourning a loss that nothing can replace.

These chapels as appendages of state
Are chiefly valued. Here the household met.
But though our dwellings have no household altar,
They are not therefore "godless." 'Tis the vice
Of narrow systems thus to separate
The sacred and profane. All truth is sacred;
And the bare chambers of a poor man's home
May be fair temples very dear to God.

There are two silent quadrangles, antique
As college "quads." Each has its entrance tower;
The one a feudal pile of ancient strength,
With battlement and turret for the watch,
And archway closed with massive gates of oak,
By which you enter a deserted court—
A quaint enclosure fenced from modern times,
And their destructive influences—ground
Held sacred to the past. Its dampest nooks
Are green with moss, and rusty with red gold
Of coloured lichens such as painters love.
All round it quaint old windows look upon you
With diamond-leaded panes of dingy glass,
Mullions and transoms—that which lights the hall
Is older than the rest, and traceries.

But round the lower quadrangle you see
A larger range of offices, and there
The pavement is compact and well preserved,
Though all uneven, for the builders sloped
Their very floors, but we make all things level
As glassy water. In this larger court
The belfry stands, an airy octagon,
Whose roof is borne by slender tracery,
Through which the winds might blow when the bell
 swung,

And take its music down the quiet vale.
A relic room you enter from this court
Contains the bell dethroned ; and giant boots
Of massive structure, high and strong enough
For soldiers in the trenches ; firedogs, too,
Of brass, enamelled with antique designs.

The gateway tower has two delightful chambers,
Both of them richly wainscotted and ceiled,
Lighted by little windows, none alike,
Whence you look down upon the fair demesne
Where the sweet Wye, with freely-rambling course,
Wanders between rich banks and birchen isles,
Then flows beneath the arches of the bridge.
This gateway has a curious evidence
That many feet have entered it before.
There is a little wicket in the gate ;
And under it the step of solid stone

Is worn right through—and there the foot sinks deep,
As in a sunken footprint in the snow.

Around these courts are all the offices
Wherein the Vernon's retinue were lodged,
Seven score well-fed domestics. I explored
Their empty barrack on a rainy day,
When heavy drops had dabbled all my work
As tears deface the manuscripts of grief.
I found a hidden key beneath a door,
Which opened and disclosed a flight of stairs,
Great solid logs of oak, like quarried blocks
Built by rude masons. Having locked the door
Behind me, and ascended these rough steps,
I wandered on through suites of silent rooms—
Some lined with wainscot and old tapestry,
Whose ghostlike shapes looked on me as I passed
With sleepless, vacant stare. Through many such
I wandered—chambers like those gloomy ones,
Dilapidated, haunted, and disused,
In that most dread erection of Romance,
The Castle of Udolpho, where with awe
We strayed before the mind had lost that touch
Of fearful superstition that sublimes
Such phantasies. But I, whose constant aim
Has been to tune myself in unison
With what my own age is, or strives to be,
And tame wild fancy to the sovereign rule

Of Fact and Nature, cannot now recall
The marvellous of boyhood. I have come
Hither some years too late ; my heart is cold
To all that would have influenced me once
In these old chambers. Disenchanted now,
They speak another language, deeper far,
Yet not a voice of mystery and awe
Simply of common life, which we may find
About us still in forms as wonderful.
And there is nothing quaint nor strange to me,
Nor ancient any longer. If you live
Enslaved by present customs, and perceive
No quaintness in *our* life, the past excites
A sort of idle wonder, being strange ;
But thoughtful men who find within themselves
Germs which another culture would have trained
To old Assyrian forms, are not disposed
To wonder at remains of bygone manners
Only because they differed from our own.

In one small chamber looking to the west,
The walls are lined throughout with tapestry—
The best in all the building. Fifty boys,
With supple, fleshy forms and golden hair,
Are gathering grapes and apples overripe,
With cheeks as bright and rosy as their own.
Most full of life are they, not stiff nor quaint,
But grouped as Nature groups her sons in sport.

They climb the loaded trees, and hand the produce
By basketfuls to those who wait below.

One bends, that on his shoulders soft and broad
His little friend may climb and reach the fruit ;
Meanwhile his playmate slaps him heartily.

Clasping a bough, another swings in air.

Take heed, bold youngster ! In my boyhood once,

When we were bathing on a summer's day,

I climbed a tree that bent above the stream,

And hid myself all naked in the branches ;

But, in descending, bruised my tender skin,

And found that it was softer than the bark.

Here, too, a river winds, wherein they plunge,

And one is half across. O, happy boys !

Are you the babes who died in infancy,

And were translated to the orchard groves,

The vineyards, and the streams of Paradise ?

Not all these chambers are so richly hung ;

But there are suites of naked, whitewashed rooms,

Cheerless as empty barracks. Here you see

Renaissance art in all its worthlessness ;

Whole heaps of canvass torn and cast aside

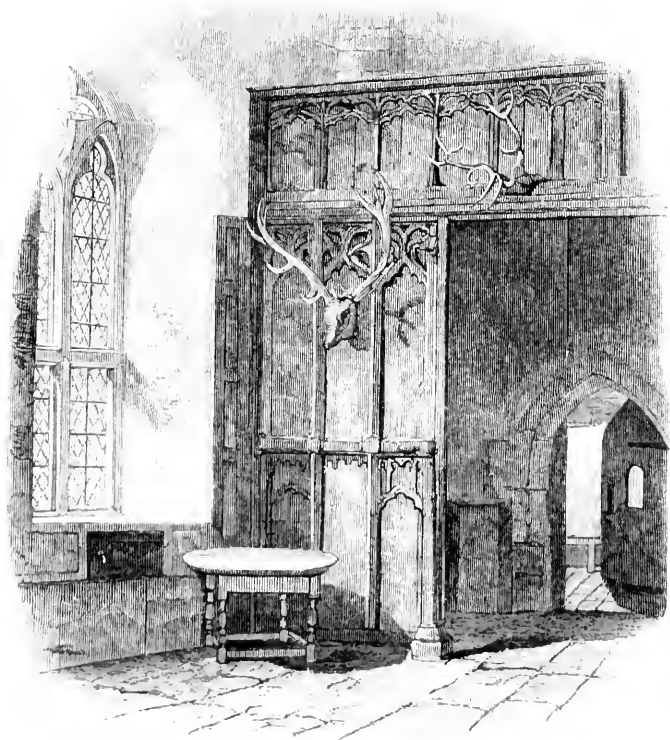
Out of the faded frames. With subjects such

As Etty's knowledge could not dignify,

These wretched painters worked without an aim,

Lost and degraded. Let us mourn for them.

They had no solid pleasure in their art,



No serious thought nor purpose. They had lost
The earnest spirit of the elder time,
But had not gained that firm and settled faith
In Nature which supplies its place with us :
So they went back to worn and bygone creeds,
And thence grew insincere, and left the truth,
And all their work is worthless. The young lord
Who stands behind his horse and looks at you
From the great picture on the staircase wall,
Is worth a Louvre of immortal gods ;
So is the stalwart keeper of the deer
Who stands in the great hall.

I sat and worked

Beneath his eye on cold and rainy days,
Painting the antlered screen, which still retains
The hasp, strange relic of a ruder age !
Convivial usage was a tyrant then,
And if a manly soul would not submit
To wallow in the mire of drunkenness,
They fixed him in this pillory with shouts
Of jeering laughter, and, like boys at school,
Poured down his sleeve what he refused to drink.
This iron wristlock is the very type
And symbol of the boyhood of mankind,
When custom is despotic, and unites
All its adherents in confederate bands
To persecute the recusant. But thou,
Brave soul, whom all thy comrades turn against

With scornful laughter or profounder hate,
For some unyielding nobleness of thine,—
Bear it serenely ; be urbane and calm ;
But hold thy true convictions, and obey
The God within thy breast ! We have advanced
Since these old customs ruled the banquets here ;
And at the brilliant tables of the great
Rich wines are offered by a friendly host,
As Nature offers springs of fairest water
For those to drink who thirst, yet does not take
Offence at our refusal—but to cram
Your guests with food or wine against their will,
As the great monkey did poor Gulliver,
Is most unfriendly. Let our object be
To make our neighbours happy in our home,
And there allow them perfect liberty,
So that the hour may pass without restraint.

There is a massive table in the hall,
At which the host presided long ago,
And dined with all his servants, not without
Some signs of rank more strongly marked than now.
And in his place at Christmas, after floods
Of ale had borne his hearers to that shore
Of bliss that I, alas ! have never known,
He sang a song of welcome. Well received
That song would be : the voice of Mario

Is not so grateful to a perfect ear
As that old Earl's to his dependent guests.

I sat at work upon the antlered screen ;
And through the hall came parties every hour,
Led by a little maiden as their guide.
They see the great, rough kitchens. Afterwards
They cross the hall, and in the dining-room
Learn that our modern homes, with all their faults,
If not so rudely picturesque and quaint,
Have more true comfort. I would rather spend
A fortnight at the Peacock than in state
Visit the petty king, if it might be,
Who held his court three hundred years ago
In this old mansion. He, with all his power,
Had not a cup of tea to offer one—
No billiard-room, nor pleasant library,
Whose cool recesses on a summer noon
The silent student haunts—no statue, bust,
Nor gallery of pictures. Those rewards
That Nature gives so freely to mankind
For their pursuit of knowledge were not his—
The cheap and punctual newspaper—the train
That brought me down to Rowsley, whilst I sat
And read a shilling volume. At his feasts
He had no music I should care to hear,
For all the great composers were unborn,
All instruments imperfect. He might read

Old Chaucer, but our Shakspeare was not known
To those with whom he sojourned.

After all,

The animal must first be satisfied ;
And it might be a wholesome change for us
To live as they did for a year or two—
To hunt with that old huntsman in the hall,
And break our fast at six on beef and ale,
And dance in the long ball-room every night,
And throw all weak refinements to the winds.

That long, quaint ball-room ! When the evening sun
Looks through the mullioned windows in the court,
And throws strong lights upon the oaken floor,
I walk there like a monk in cloisters old
In meditation ; lingering, as I go,
To stand in the great oriels, and look up
To those proud shields that in the diamond panes
Recall the golden time of history,
The glorious reign of brave Elizabeth.
Beneath this noble ceiling dancers held
Gay revellings ; and here amongst a crowd
Of maskers danced two lovers long ago,
Then sauntered towards the ante-room for air ;
And, unsuspected, through the folding doors
That open on the terrace, down the steps
Went forth into the moonlight, and escaped.

The scene of this elopement is indeed
Full of romance, when from the ante-room
You look down the old stairs, whose balustrades
And spheres of stone are exquisite in colour,
Tinted by Nature ; and the dark green yews,
And great bay-window with its ivied base,
Shut in the narrow picture.

Hence you pass
Into the lordly bedchamber of state,
Where, hung with faded velvet richly lined,
Still stands the royal bed—the only one
Left in the building. In the oriel
There is a mirror framed with tortoise-shell,
Wherein, they say, the lovely Queen of Scots
Was once reflected. Oh, that it had been
Like wondrous silver, sensitive enough
To hold her form for ever !

You ascend
The watch-tower next, and from its lofty turret
Look down upon the leads. Beneath you lies
All the great house, with quadrangles and towers.
Long, leaded roofs, and lines of battlement,
Reposing in the heat of summer noon
Like an old steed, that, having served its master
Well in its prime, is freed at last from duty,
And sleeps in sunny pastures.

I have seen
Old houses, where the men of former time

Have lived and died, so wantonly destroyed
By their descendants, that a place like this,
Preserved with pious care, but not "restored"
By rude, presumptuous hands, nor modernised
To suit convenience, seems a precious thing ;
And I would thank its owner for the hours
That I have spent there ; and I leave it now,
Hoping that his successors may preserve
Its roof with equal tenderness. It gave
Good shelter to their fathers many a year.

FOR —

I HAVE a thousand messengers to bear
What I have written over land and sea,
But one is chiefly favoured. He shall wear
A richer dress, and shall my herald be
Unto the court of Love to plead for me.
Go swiftly forth, my little messenger,
And seek my love, for she will harbour thee ;
And ask her why we are not as we were,
When in our early years I gained that pledge from her.

POEMS OF WAR.

“Suppose the Greeks, instead of representing their own warriors as they fought at Marathon, had left us nothing but their imaginations of Egyptian battles?”—RUSKIN.

Few poems in this division of the work can be said to have originated in my own experience. I resisted the temptation to write from other people's accounts as long as I could, but the excitement of the war fairly compelled me to relieve myself in verse. The reader will think it strange that the devoted heroism of the Light Brigade called forth no more than a passing allusion. The truth is, I possessed Tennyson's magnificent lines on the same subject before they were published ; and thought it more becoming, as well as more prudent, to retire from the contest.

THE PILLAR OF PEACE.

WITHIN the Palatine of Lancaster,
The peasants from the hills do congregate
To labour in the valleys, and have built
In barren lands such towns of industry,
That they thereby have made themselves a power
Which none who rule in England may despise.
To them is Peace no dream of sentiment,
But of their system an essential part,
And to their welfare a necessity.
Thus when the wars of the French Conqueror
Seemed at an end, and that gigantic spirit,
Like an Arabian afrit bottled up,
And sealed for ever with a talisman,
Had been compressed in Elba by his foes,
It so rejoiced these men, that they combined
To raise a pillar on a mountain-peak ;
Not in the exultation his defeat

Might well have caused—but to commemorate
The restoration of their sovereign Peace
Unto her throne, usurped by cruel War.

A mountain lies between me and the peak
Whereon that pillar stood; and in my youth
I often climbed a cliff, whose highest ridge
I knew that I had reached, when in the east,
Above the blue waves of the rounded land,
Rose that strong pillar in the lofty winds.
Its hour had not arrived, and it defied
The storms that raged whilst Europe was at peace:
But when the Czar's ambition burst its bounds,
Pouring armed legions into Turkish lands,
And cruel slaughter on the villagers,
A fissure in its masonry increased,
Until its stair grew perilous.

At last,
The very night the Czar's ambassador,
When all our hopes of settlement had failed,
And diplomats exhausted all their arts,
Broke off his old relations with our court,
And, by departing, menaced us with war,—
That very night, beneath the windy sky,
A roar like thunder echoed in the hills,
And startled in their beds the peasantry;
Who on the morrow, when they went to work,
Beheld the sun rise through a cloud of blood





Behind the eastern hill ; but his red disk
Shone unobstructed where the sign had been
Of happy peace. The pillar of their hope
Lay like a cairn above the 'grave of Peace ;
And thence they drew an omen of their woes,
And went to labour with dejected hearts
To earn the precious bread of scarcity.*

* Stoodley Pike was erected by subscription in 1814 to commemorate the General Peace. It was an interesting object from the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway, standing as it did on one of the principal eminences in the neighbourhood of Todmorden. On the night of the 8th of February, 1854, (the day on which the Russian Ambassador left London, when our diplomatic relations with the court of St. Petersburg were finally suspended), this monument of Peace fell with a loud noise. The coincidence was certainly a remarkable one.

MARSHAL ST. ARNAUD.

THE heroes that the sculptor hews
Are men of giant frame ;
And when we see their marble bulk,
Who wonders at their fame ?
If we had come from such a mould,
We might have been the same.

But since we have to toil and bear,
We say, " there is no scope
For greatness in this life of ours ;"
And so we moil and mope,
And sink at once to lower aims,
And lose the light of hope.

But though you suffer—even though
Death stare you in the face,—
There may be some great task for you
Before you leave your place ;
So live till that is well fulfilled,
Then go with better grace.

By him who won the Alma heights,
And when the cannon's roar
Subsided, had the foe to meet,
Whose cruel marks he bore—
A silent foe that laid him low
At last for evermore ;

By him who crushed his inward pain,
And bravely to the last
Bore up—bear up with fortitude,
Until your strife is past !
Bear up ! the trial is not long,
When life runs out so fast.

Health, strength, the sprightliness of youth,
He had no more than you ;
He rode, a living skeleton,
And saw the battle through !
My friends ! there is no task on earth
A brave soul cannot do.

And Death himself respected him,
 Though he would have him soon ;
And on his right hand and his left
 There stood a brave dragoon,
And held the Marshal on his horse
 To hear the merry tune—

The merry music of the guns,
 The shouting on the height,
The dull, metallic clash of steel,
 When hand to hand they fight,
And the last volleys that pursue
 The vanquished in their flight.

He heard it all ; the bullets hailed
 Around him, but in vain ;
For it was right the world should know
 The strife he did sustain :
Not thus was he to end at last
 His bitter years of pain.

He died a nobler death—he proved
 What he had suffered long.
He died a nobler death than those
 Who go to battle strong,
And fall without a pang, and leave
 Bright epitaphs in song.

And when the living in the camp,
The dead upon the field,
Slept soundly—in the Marshal's tent
His last despatch he sealed,
Telling his army's fortitude—
His own he kept concealed.

Brave Marshal ! he could leave his home—
His wife—his country—all
That smooths the pillow at the last,
And lets the weary fall
Into the bed whose counterpane
Is the dark velvet pall.

He knew he had not long to live,
And yet "what months remain
To me of life," the Marshal said,
"Shall take me once again
Into the field of battle—there
To end this life of pain."

Brave Marshal ! to the shores of France
A mournful vessel bears
The soldier taking rest at last,
And free from all his cares.
And freshly green is the laurel wreath
The dead man calmly wears.

Two nations mourned his noble death ;
And on the funeral day
The flags of France and England
Upon his coffin lay :
O may they never part until
The nations pass away !

Beneath their broad united shade
The men of Alma died ;
Oh, never may our enemies
Such friends again divide,
Whose weakness is to be at war,—
Whose strength to be allied !

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

LEARNING could not crush thy heart,
Thou art gentle woman still ;
All thine aim, her better part
Well and truly to fulfil.

All the pleasures of thy sex,
All its little gauds and toys,
Never did thy soul perplex—
Thou hast far sublimer joys.

O sweet lady ! thou indeed,
Where thy saintly virtues shine,
Dost exalt thy Christian creed
By those holy works of thine.

Thou shalt have a foremost place
In the annals of our time :
They have much of mean and base,
Something also of sublime.

Many a soldier, old and grey,
Afterwards shall tell the tale
How he watched you as he lay,
Holy Florence Nightingale,

Walking through the wards at night,
Crowded corridors of pain !
How he watched your lessening light
Like a star, till lost again !

Fragile bodies often hold
Hearts devoted, brave, and true ;
Fragile bodies, hero-souled,
Mighty tasks can struggle through.

Whilst another frame endures
Sickness, you forget your own :
Some, with less excuse than yours,
Would have lived for self alone.

Lady ! thus a rhymers pours
Idle music in thine ear ;
But thy spirit where it soars
Sweeter sounds must often hear.

Sweeter far than poet's tongue,
Or the murmurs of the crowd,
Is the heavenly music sung
In the conscience clear and loud.

Angels' voices, day and night,
Cheer thee on through toil and pain ;
In thy bosom burns a light ;
Aids unseen thy strength sustain.

THE SHIP OF MISERY.

FIFTEEN hundred wounded men
 Are her merry passengers ;
 Never ship went on a trip
 Less enjoyable than hers.
 After Alma's bloody day
 She takes the wounded far away.

Fifteen hundred wounded men !
 Scarce a surgeon for them all !
 Broken bones — pain and groans —
 Wounds of bayonet and ball.
 Wretched ship ! she has on board
 Firstfruits of the reaping sword.

Fifteen hundred wounded men
 Lying groaning in the dark.
 Many a night must take its flight
 Ere the wretches disembark.
 As the worn-out surgeon goes
 Past them, how they clutch his clothes !

Fifteen hundred wounded men
 Darkly borne across the waves !
Envyng those their repose
 Who rest at Alma in their graves.
Many a sufferer gets his wish
When his body feeds the fish.

Fifteen hundred wounded men
 Lying putrid in their beds !
Heaves the sea ! O misery !
 How it's swimming in their heads !
No one heeds his neighbour's groan,
Each has sufferings of his own.

Fifteen hundred wounded men !—
 No ! not fifteen hundred now !
Wounds untended, often ended
 In sweet slumber—you know how.
When the ship at anchor rode,
What a cargo to unload !

Jack looked pale—it turned him sick—
 Pitch the blankets overboard !
All the road to that abode
 Where lay the victims of the sword,
Strewn with mutilated men
Gone too far to rise again.

AFTER A BATTLE.

WHEN England feared invasion, and the man
To whom we owe the friendly aid of France
Was slandered and abused by all our prints,
The clowns in rustic districts, and the hands
Of mills and foundries in our crowded towns,
Were all invited by the Government
To serve as soldiers one month out of twelve ;
So that if ever on our native shores
Invading armies landed, there might be
A population fitly trained and armed
To meet the invader and defend our homes.
Then I, and other idlers like myself,
Gave up a certain portion of our time
To change a thousand men of Lancashire
From rough, uncouth civilians into pawns,
Steady upon the chessboard of the field—
Well-disciplined battalions. Of this force

We were the captains, and we had our work.
But soon by constant drilling, day by day,
And sifting of the refuse, we became
More soldier-like ; and in the second year
Of our enrolment it occurred to me
To gain a new impression.

Every day,

When we were wearied with battalion drill,
With marching twenty times across the field,
And forming squares, preparing to resist
Imaginary squadrons, with four fronts
Of thickly glistening bayonets, firing blank
On the blank wind, or charging it in line,—
When we were tired of these heroic toils,
The bugle sounded, and we grounded arms.
Then suddenly the green field in the sun
Was sprinkled with red jackets, for the men
Reclined to rest their limbs ; we officers,
Forming a little group upon the grass,
Discussing pay, accounts, and stoppages,
And all the business of our companies.
And once, as we remarked about the men,
How in repose they took so many ways
Of gaining rest, that all the thousand men
Displayed a thousand attitudes, a thought
Occurred to one which I shall not forget :
He said, “ They ’re like the wounded and the dead
After a battle—left upon the field.”

Then suddenly I pictured to myself
A thousand helpless creatures lying there,
Dead, or in pain. The stillness of repose
Grew deathlike, and the motion of a limb
A tortured writhing ; so I looked and looked,
And let imagination do its work.

It was an awful fancy—thickly strewn
The corpses of our men ; and I went forth
In thought among the dead to recognise
The features that I knew. The baleful sun
Rotted the bodies, and with divers wounds
Too horrible to think of or describe,
The living also putrified and stank ;
And here and there a wandering carrion soul
Plundered the dead and dying—groans of pain

* * * *

My dread illusion was destroyed at once ;
Our band struck up, and all my wounded men,
Aye, and the dead, sprang lightly to their feet,
And flocked to hear the music ; and the sun,
No longer baleful, kissed the brazen horns.

THE CHILD-SOLDIER.

A LITTLE boy stood on the field,
A little English boy ;
It was a merry game, thought he,
And he was brisk with joy.
The battle seemed but sport to him,
And every ball a toy.

He was a British Grenadier,
And he was ten years old ;
And therefore what had he to fear,
A soldier brisk and bold ?
The little lad was bravely clad
In English red and gold.

Undaunted when the iron balls
Were bowled along the ground,
He marched unhurt where six-foot men
Their graves of glory found ;
He marched along with a stalwart throng
To the cannon's awful sound.

But when the battle had been fought,
And on the field at night
Lay fifteen hundred Englishmen
In miserable plight,
The little lad would take no rest,
Though wearied with the fight.

But, stepping over many a corpse,
His comrades saw him go,
And risk his life by passing close
To many a wounded foe.
“What means the lad? He must be mad
To court destruction so!”

They watched him. He was gathering wood.
It warmed their hearts to see
That fearless lad—of broken stocks
A heavy load had he.
He made a fire upon the field,
And boiled a can of tea.

Cold, cold, and stiff the wounded lay;
Yet still one cheerful spot—
One fire was blazing brightly near—
One kind friend left them not:
And grateful were those pleasant draughts
He brought them—steaming hot.

And so he passed the midnight hours
With hell on every side ;
And during that long dreadful night,
In suffering hundreds died :
But some were saved by the soldier-lad
And the comforts he supplied.

At Balaklava, and the height
Of Inkerman—the grave
Of thousands—this heroic child
Fought bravely with the brave.
Hemmed round by Russian bayonets,
He still survived to save

The lives of others afterwards ;
And there are those who say,
That, but for that good-hearted boy,
They must have died that day,
When on the field of Inkerman
The helpless wounded lay.*

* The hero of this little ballad (which is merely a plain statement of facts) is Thomas Keep, of the third battalion of Grenadier Guards, under the command of Col. Thomas Wood. He saved the lives of Serjeant Russell and others, and has been recommended by Colonels Robinson and Wood. His personal bravery in the field might be in part the effect of example and excitement, but it is impossible to praise too highly his self-sacrificing devotion to the wounded, and his active exertions in their behalf. If I had the enviable power, possessed only by great poets, of conferring fame on others, this gallant boy should be an enduring example of the best qualities of genuine English boyhood.

TO GENERAL SCARLETT,

LEADER OF THE HEAVY CAVALRY AT BALAKLAVA.*

WE knew that there was more beneath
 That quiet countenance of yours ;
 We vaguely thought, " He will reveal
 The greatness circumstance obscures,
 If ever Fortune's sun shall gleam
 Upon the hardy, hidden flower."
 It gleamed — your germ of chivalry
 Has bloomed to glory in an hour ! "

* Addressed to Brigadier-General (since Major-General) the Honourable J. Y. Scarlett, on reading the account in "The Times" of the successful heavy cavalry charge at Balaklava, which he headed in person.

I see you wave a glittering sword—
 Along your massive squadrons ride,
And point across the narrow plain
 To hosts upon the other side ;
Then take your place and give the word,
 And—louder than the trumpet—hear,
In answer from your gallant men—
 A willing—hearty—English cheer !

Behind the grey-clad Muscovites
 A clump of lances glimmering shone ;
The English trumpets sound again—
 Then hush the anxious lookers-on !
The Russian lines were long and deep,
 Long lines and deep both front and rear ;
Away goes Scarlett with the Greys !
 And who shall check his dread career ?

Three armies watch you ! Thundering on
 Across the plain your horsemen ride :
What grand sensations thrilled you then—
 Sensations sweet to soldier pride !
To lead the flower of chivalry—
 To feel your charger bound beneath
The terrible joy of glorious war,
 Too full of life to think of death !

They say it is a fiendish joy,
Not human feelings, that they feel,
Who ride "like devils dressed in red,"
With heads of brass and stings of steel.
I know not what you felt yourself
Beneath that plume of flowing white,
I only know that you displayed
The courage of an English knight.

I see your plume of flowing white ;
I see the glimmer of your sword
Far off, and faint—and less—and less—
Till lost amid a savage horde.
Yes, they have met—their blades are wet—
O God, preserve each brave dragoon !
From gloomy masses broken through,
I see the red emerging soon.

Exhausted—scattered—almost lost—
They ride against the second line.
Behind them close their shaken foes—
They must be foiled in that design !
Another mass of living men
Is hurled against them—brief the fight—
They turn—well thrashed—not every steed
Will reach Sebastopol to-night !

A mighty feat had been performed
In that arena ! On the hill
A crowd of breathless watchers stood,
In solemn silence wrapt—until
The Russians fled before our men ;
And then they took a little pause
To breathe—and then from every lip
There burst a shout of loud applause.

Returning from a short pursuit,
With dinted helmet—wounded arm—
A slight and gentle virgini-wound,
A wound of honour more than harm—
You rode in triumph, and your chief,
The grey old friend of Wellington,
Despatched a special messenger
To meet you, and to say, “ Well done ! ”

It was a glorious hour for you !
They say your eye was proudly bright,
And that upon your sun-burnt cheek
There flushed a bloom of deep delight,
When, bowing with a soldier's grace,
You thanked your chieftain for his praise,—
Words that would reach your native land,
And those you loved, ere many days.

Your knighthood is as bright as theirs
Who won their spurs at Agincourt ;*
And, set against that brilliant day,
Your former life seems dark and poor.
It is not so. In those long years,
Though unproductive to the world,
You wrought the banner of your fame,
In time of peace ignobly furled.

And I have seen you, year by year,
Wait calmly for that glorious hour ;
Wait, till the prime of life was past—
Still hopeful, husbanding your power.
The noble lesson you have taught
Is, “Learn to labour and to wait ;”
And I am thankful for your sake
The guerdon has not come too late.

* The battle of Balaklava took place on the anniversary of Agincourt. This stanza anticipates the Order of the Bath for General Scarlett. It has since been conferred upon him.

SIR DE LACY EVANS

AT INKERMAN.

“On the heights of Inkerman you displayed that undaunted courage and chivalrous conduct which have called forth the admiration of your country ; when, rising from a bed of sickness, you hastened to assist with your counsel and experience the gallant officer in temporary command of your division, and refused to withhold from him the honours whilst you shared with him the dangers of the day.”—*The Speaker of the House of Commons to Sir De Lacy Evans.*

IN a heavy fog their watch they kept
On the heights of Inkerman,
Down their bayonets coldly the raindrops crept
When that dreary day began.
Up through the mist from the leaguered town
The bells of the churches pealed,
And the pickets from the heights looked down
Where the valley lay concealed.

In the dead of the night, ere the dawn was grey,
The sound of artillery wheels
Rumbled faintly — “ ‘They come this way,’ —
Uneasy the sentry feels.
“ ‘T is the arabas on the road below,”
Deceived, the soldiers said ;
For they heard not the voice of their cautious foe,
Nor his army’s stealthy tread.

In the city at midnight a solemn mass
Was sung by bishops seven,
Who promised that those who fell should pass
At once to the joys of heaven.
The Emperor sent his own dear son
To encourage the troops — said he,
“ The besiegers before the year is done
Must be driven into the sea ! ”

In the fleet that anchored near the shore
In Balaklava bay,
Roused by the cannon’s opening roar
From the sick-bed where he lay,
A pale knight rose at the sound of war,
Like a hunter at the horn,
For glorious music rolled afar
That dark November morn.

With an anxious heart the sick knight rode,
For he knew one point was weak ;
And long ere then did his fears forebode,
And he spoke when he ought to speak.
But his good advice was thrown away,
And the men were tired and few,
That in the cloud defenceless lay
When the balls came flying through.

Arrived on the field, he refused to take
From his junior's faithful hand
His brave division ; and still for its sake
Advised, though he would not command.
The danger he shared, but the post and name
Of a leader resigned to his friend,
Though he rose from a sick-bed and painfully came
To be with them until the end.

With their bayonets crossed in deadly strife,
Closely, breast to breast,
Steady and stern they fought for life
On the mountain's awful crest :
And down in many a deep ravine,
And many a lonely glen,
Were bloodiest contests held unseen
By bands of desperate men.

'T was a terrible day, yet calm and pale
The sick knight saw it through ;
But a time must come when the strong limbs fail,
If the spirit fails not too :
And he said, " I am old, I have earned repose,
Let me die in my native land !"
And this chivalrous effort marked the close
Of the hero's long command.

THE ALLIES IN THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

APRIL 20th, 1855.

DOWN from his niche with England's Queens and Kings
 Looked Cromwell on a strange event to-day ;
 For under the broad shadow of the screen
 There passed a ruler, who, like him, had pressed
 And edged his way into the foremost rank
 Amongst the heirs of thrones.

He passed along ;

And at his side there walked a regnant Queen,
 Fair England leaning on the arm of France,
 Allied for war—our Queen with Bonaparte !
 And after them their consorts, and the train
 Of courtiers who attach themselves to crowns.

Then down the long perspective of the nave
 They looked, and every detail in the sun
 Became a sparkling gem—the marble pools,
 With tall glass fountains, under whose bright showers

Refreshed and cool, young water-lilies float—
Green orange-trees in stately avenues—
White statues shining out against the green,
And the rich crimson cloth upon the floor,
With the ærial tinting of the roof,
And the deep blue of heaven over all,
Made it a feast of colour.

By the marge
Along the pool of lilies they passed on,
Into that lovely dwelling which was built
To show the people how in former time,
Before volcanic ashes made a tomb
Of their gay town, the old Pompeians lived.
Upon the threshold, in mosaic stones
Set in the pavement, stands a furious dog;
And, underneath, the legend "Cave canem."
But in the other entrances you meet
A kinder welcome—"Salve!" In the hall,
Beneath the oblong opening in the roof,
Through which the sunlight falls, a shallow pool
Of marble holds the rain and cools the house:
It is so clear and shallow, that you see
Its fair mosaics bright with many hues
Of coloured marbles—there the gold fish swims.
Close to this pool a graceful statue stands.
Most delicate and fanciful, and light
Are all the decorations; every hue
Intense and brilliant. Round the entrance-hall

Are little cells to sleep in—such confined
And narrow chambers as you rarely see.
They did not know the luxury of sleep,
Because their days were bright; but we, to whom
The very beams of day are thick with cares,
Build spacious chambers for the rest we love.
Past the great hall, and at the other end
Of this strange mansion, is 'the peristyle—
A hall of columns with a little garden,
A little, lovely garden of four beds,
Brilliant with many hyacinths; and there
Amongst the flowers a white fawn stands for ever,
And to its nostrils sweetest odours rise;
And still it feeds not.

In the dining-room

The couches are all ready for the guests;
But we are of another place and time,
And may not banquet with the unseen host
Of this fair mansion whom our fancy paints.

Thence to the 'Central Transept, where the roof
Springs nearest heaven; and through its arch the sun
Looks on the great Twin Brethren—mighty forms—
Rugged—colossal—they who hold their steeds
In the vast transept, those white steeds of war,
Which at the Lake Regillus did appear,
Bearing their princely riders to the fight,
When gods allied with Rome, as legends tell.

Then down the transept to the balcony
That overlooks the gardens. When they came,
The monarchs and their consorts, to receive
The greetings of the people, such a sight
As they beheld no monarch's eye before
Had ever witnessed. All the sloping hill
Beneath laid out in spacious terraces,
With marble statues on the balustrades
At intervals, and great broad flights of stairs,
And two long wings projecting at each side
That end in lofty towers transparent, light,
And crystalline, the colour of the sky.
Then on the spacious terraces the throng
Of twenty thousand people, gaily dressed
In festal garments, raised a mighty shout
Of welcome to the Emperor!—loud cheers
That rose and fell with glorious energy!
And all that surging sea of human life
Ceased not its deep-voiced music of applause
Whilst he stood gazing from the balcony
Upon the scene before him. Rich and broad
The landscape spread—the air so clear and bright,
That every detail was distinctly seen,
Even to the spires of distant villages
That slept in the deep woodlands far away.
Napoleon's hardness yielded, and the face
Of his sweet Empress beamed with radiant smiles.
It was indeed an animating sight,

Most full of life and sunshine, when the bands
Upon the terrace played the song of France,
Composed, they say, by Queen Hortense, whose son
Stood listening to the old familiar air
At that proud moment; and his mother's voice
Came sweetly with those grand, triumphant notes.

Till then the waters slumbered in the earth;
That day they rose through fountains to the height
Of their full stature—columned showers of spray,
Wherein the sun hangs rainbows. Afterwards,
In future years, when round the pleasant brink
Of their vast basins, men shall stand and hear
The music of the waters, they will tell
How, when these fountains rose into the light
For the first time, two monarchs saw their birth,
And France and England were allied in war.

The styles of all true architecture spring
From no vague, lawless fancies of the brain,
But from the life of nations; so, to teach
The people something of the powers of old
That were the strongest nations in their time,
Have many courts been copied from their works:
And through these courts the royal strangers went,
Egypt, and Greece, and Rome; and after them,
Like the enchantments of an Eastern tale,
The fairy-like Alhambra!

Round the Court

Of Lions is a glorious colonnade
Of golden pillars, and a marble fountain
Stands in the centre. If you walk between
The pillars and the wall, and look around
Till all the intricate detail grows confused
And overpowers you, and the illumined colours,
Gold—scarlet—blue—become like gorgeous hues
At sunset, that you feel but cannot trace ;
And then look through the arch into the hall
Of Justice, where the splendour still extends
In light subdued, all inexhaustible ;
And still beyond, a third fair hall you see,
Fit for Haroun Alraschid in his prime—
Then, if your soul have aught of old romance,
Conceive Eugénie's thoughts when she beheld
This fair enchantment, which recalled to her
The old traditions of her native land !

The Central Transept was a glorious scene
When the great crowd had entered ; and the floor
And all the upper galleries were black
With swarms of human creatures. In the midst,
Raised high above the murmuring multitude,
Upon four thrones the royal pairs sat down
To hear the mighty music of the band.
Above the two crowned heads the colours hung
Of France and England, and long banners drooped

Heavy with golden bees. Upon the dais,
Beneath the glorious arch that he had built,
Great in himself—and in himself alone,
Stood Paxton, farther from his start in life
Than that strong potentate the Emperor.

One incident I cannot but record.
Before the princes entered on the scene,
As I sat looking down upon the throng,
Across the open space about the dais
There walked an invalid with quiet steps,
In peaceful costume, and I heard a cry
Of "*Cardigan! hurrah for Cardigan!*"
Yes, that was he who led so gallantly
His brave, devoted squadrons to the guns
At Balaklava, scorning death itself,
Through the hot fire of Russian batteries,
That swept the breadth of plain they charged across.
Our best and bravest thrown away for nought,
As if their lives were worthless! O, great God!
If thou hast blinded those who rule this land,
Spare unto us the people's nobler blood!

When we returned to London, looking from
The carriage window to the glorious hill,
Crowned with a brighter, more resplendent crown
Than Athens or the seven hills of Rome,

I saw the blazing sun upon the height
Low down the sky ; and as our speed increased,
More swiftly rolled along the level ridge
The golden disc. A crystal tower between
Fled, like the towers of airy palaces
We build in dreams ; and onward rolled the sun,
On to the structure that against the sky
Stood pale and like a cloud upon the hill.
Then through that delicate fabric blazed the sun,
Moving from end to end along the nave,
And all its thousand pillars seemed to melt
Like mist before him, and the iron frame
Of the arched roof dissolved in floods of light.
So to the other tower upon the left
He passed, and broad and huge the building stood,
Dim in the distance, pale, and mountainous.

And now its courts are empty ! Yet, perhaps,
Although the royal music of the band
And the vast audience are no longer there,
Not wholly silent—for the nightingales
That dwell there sing by night, when through the roof,
And down the orange avenues, the moon
Looks from her throne in heaven, and all is still.
Then to a thousand statues sings a bird,
And thinks she has a flattering audience—
Silent—attentive—breathless—a great throng

Hushed by the spell of her melodious voice.
The giant twins of Egypt on their thrones,
Looking above the tops of the young palms,
Smile at the little nightingale, and she
Sings sweetly as another songstress once
To living thousands on the opening day.

AT DOVER.

APRIL 1855.

It is the midnight murmur of the sea,
The old sweet voice ! and yet I cannot sleep,
But lie and look abroad upon the deep,
Watching the wondrous thoughts that come to me.
From dimming vapours all the stars are free ;
And one is burning on the coast of France,
An earthly beacon — it will not advance
With those true stars, for whom it seems to be
A fit companion. They ascend the sky —
It sits on the horizon — there to shine
Across the waters ; whilst beneath them fly
Electric currents through the sunken line
Which so unites us to our brave ally,
That we are one in instant sympathy.

CORRUPTION.

1855.

CORRUPTION filled old nations ere they fell ;
And we have here such commerce as degrades
All parties—and dishonourable trades
In things that no one ought to buy or sell.
Corruption spreads—its bounds we cannot tell—
It has become a theme so trite and stale,
That, till the crown itself shall be for sale,
The world will say, “ the system answers well
In church and camp—’t is simply carried out,
And saves us trouble.” Merit set in gold
Receives its due acknowledgment, no doubt ;
Yet even here some honours are not sold,
And these two things, at least, you cannot buy—
The poet’s laurel, and the artist’s eye !

IMPERIAL GUESTS.

A SKETCH IN PICCADILLY, APRIL 16, 1855.

I stood upon a balcony, and watched
The ceaseless currents in the public street.
There were no houses opposite. The Park
Lay green and sunny in the afternoon ;
Across it, through the trees, a stately house
Stretched, broad and vast, the palace of our Queen ;
And in the distance grouped the Abbey towers,
With that huge pile whose growing youth exceeds
The sister twins already. To the left,
Far to the left, there stood another tower,
Marking the length of that vast edifice,
Wherein a thousand peers and commoners
Hold their long councils nightly. Round the Park
Some noble mansions glimmered through the trees,
The sunshine falling on their pillared fronts.

Watch we the ceaseless currents in the street.
The ducal chariot and cheap omnibus,
The very symbol of democracy,
Drive neck and neck. It is a motley crowd.
'There goes a perfect dandy—how he sits
Beneath the leathern canopy, and holds
The reins with dainty fingers, lemon-gloved !
His horse has glorious action ! close behind
His tiger clings, diminutive and neat.
A lumbering chariot, with a hammercloth
And portly coachman in resplendent hues,
Is followed closely by an orange cart,—
Pushed by the orange merchant, who sings out
His weary notes. With four black horses, plumed
With ostrich feathers, comes an equipage,
The chariot of the dead. 'T is his last drive,
Poor fellow ! down the old, accustomed street.
He passes on in peace, and hears no sound ;
His friends come weeping after. Gay and bright
Rolls past an open carriage, and a youth
Looks love to eyes that light themselves at his.
The puppy, how I envy him ! Here comes
A figure that would suit a rustic lane
Better than this rich throng—a country farmer,
With serious, simple face, on a fat steed
Whose tail is bound with straw. Two railway vans,
With mighty chestnut horses, trotting past,
Soon overtake the farmer's sluggish mare.

Then chariot after chariot to the Park
Follow in one procession, closely packed.
And girls on horseback with attendant squires
Thread the dense crowd of wheels—a pretty sight.

The crowd grows denser. All the throng on foot
Begin to pause and wait. Across the Park
Some horsemen gallop westwards, In the street
Policemen stop the lines of carriages,
And clear a way between them.

Hear you not
That distant shouting? See! the farthest crowd
Begin to wave their hats and handkerchiefs,
And scarlet gleams amongst them. Flashes come
From cuirasses and swords before we see
A single form distinctly. Louder grows
The shouting! Here they come!—the royal guard,
Their white plumes dancing high above the throng;
A courier rides before.

The Emperor
Sat with his grave and thoughtful face relaxed
Into a smile of triumph; by his side,
The beautiful Eugénie! Every one
Of that vast crowd felt deeper interest
In her—the fair young Empress—than in him,
Who took her like a king of old romance,
And raised her to his throne, where she receives
The homage due to crownèd loveliness.

He left this country seven years ago,
Poor, friendless, scorned—a mere adventurer;
But in his absence he has placed himself
Firmly on one of Europe's mightiest thrones,
And now returns triumphant! . There are few
In modern times like him. In former days
Cromwell, perhaps, has been his prototype.

Along the river Serpentine, not far
From where that huge enchanted structure rose,
To which the world brought stores of merchandise
Before it vanished like a glorious dream—
Along the waters in the people's park
Rode troops of horsemen, on whose naked swords,
And brazen helmets, and cuirasses of steel,
The evening sun glanced brightly, and I heard
A ceaseless shouting, growing faint afar.



POEMS OF SCIENCE.

"In Science lies the California of Poetry."—HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

POETRY, like painting, usually deals only with the appearances of things—not the reality. Science, having enlarged our knowledgē, opens a new field, in which the imagination is still actively employed in the realisation of truth, and the poetic faculty has the widest possible scope. The Author has ventured on a little excursion to this new and inexhaustible field, and has arranged the fruits of his expedition under the head “Poems of Science.”

THE CENTRAL HALL

IN THE NEW PALACE AT WESTMINSTER.

BETWEEN those glorious chambers whence proceed
 The laws that govern England, lies a way
 Through many vaulted corridors and halls,
 So straight that—when the folding-gates of brass,
 The beautiful gates before the House of Peers,
 And those more modest doors of British oak
 That close the entrance to the other place,
 Are open—from the Speaker's chair direct
 Unto the royal throne, a path is clear,
 Whereby the golden splendour of that seat
 Gleams through a line of halls and corridors
 Into the Commons' House.

And in the midst
 There is a Central Hall—an octagon,
 Lofty and rich, like some fair chapter-house,
 Whence other ways pass forth to other halls,
 To one whose frescoes realise the dreams

Of our great poets ; and another where
Will stand gigantic statues of the dead
Who in times past made England what she is.
And through this marble avenue you pass
Down to the fine old hall of Westminster,
Where the death-sentence with sad, solemn tones,
Too often sounded in a sterner time.

Such are the precincts of the Central Hall.
And when I stand beneath the chandelier,
Of Gothic brass most exquisitely wrought,
Suspended through the opening in the roof—
(A ring with eight large bosses richly carved,
To which the ribs of all the vault converge)—
I feel that I am at the very heart
And inmost centre of our modern life ;
For in that hall there waits a messenger
More swift and mighty than the Genii
Of whom we read in old Arabian tales.
He is your slave—command him ! He will fly
By night or day to far provincial towns,
And take your message—yes ! the very words,
And bring an answer instantly. Nay, more—
If you should tell this spirit—*for he hath*
No substance more corporeal or gross
Than lightest Ariels born of poets' dreams—
If you should tell this spirit to proceed
To one of those old cities on the Loire,







Amongst the vineyards in the south of France,
The sea would not deter him. Where the waves
Sap the chalk cliffs at Dover he will dive,
And shoot as swiftly through the density
Of the deep waters as through summer air,
And rise upon the distant shore of France,
Which as a thin, faint line, the sentinel
At Dover, looking from the castle cliff,
Sees when the day is clear. There is no sign
Upon the sea that our swift messenger
Has passed beneath it and returned again.
He does not break the surface when he dives ;
He rises unperceived, invisible
As exhalations on a cloudless day.
And when he leaves the Palace, or returns,
No doors are opened. In his swiftest flight
He moves in perfect silence, like a sphere
Sweeping its noiseless circle round the sun.

FALLING STARS.

WITH old traditions all around us dying,
We sometimes tremble for the inner sense
That feeds upon the beautiful ; and sighing,
Repeat old tales, though faith is banished hence.

Here, as we sit, unwillingly receiving
More precious truths than they possessed of old,
We envy them the pleasure of believing,
Hoarding old coins in fields of Nature's gold.

Such are the useless treasures we inherit,
No longer current in our modern thought ;
But those who made them marked them with their spirit,
And so we keep them fondly, as we ought.

Such, amongst others, is that explanation
Of falling stars—that every one was tied
By a thread spun at somebody's creation,
And that the thread divided when he died.

It must have been delightful to believers
To take a census on the starry nights,
When the high Fates, those stern, mysterious weavers,
Hung out in heaven a multitude of lights.

But when they saw one suddenly descending
Down the bright sky—extinguished in the dark,
They knew that some one's earthly life was ending,
And saw a death in every dying spark.

Alas! the stories that we leave behind us
Contain what we can ill afford to lose;
And this may still be useful to remind us
Of death. Its warning let us not refuse.

Though knowledge may have broken the connexion
Between the tenure of our little lives
And the bright stars, their fall excites reflection,
And silent prayers for some one who survives.

And when you see a meteor wildly leaping
Into the dark, think not the legend lies;
For every moment there are mourners weeping,
And every moment some beloved one dies.

'T is a worn coin, though marked with the impression
Of human features; but I will unfold
A store of wealth—man's new and bright possession,
Gathered of late in Nature's fields of gold.

Not long ago, one evening last November,
I walked upon the mountains with my friend ;
We started after dusk, and I remember
The stars were bright before our journey's end.

And as I told him some romantic story,
I paused to watch a star that suddenly
Shot and, extinguished, left a trail of glory,
That died into faint light upon the sky.

I said, "There is a deep and sacred mystery
About those glancing lights on heaven's floor
That awes the heart." "And if you knew their history,"
Answered my friend, "you still would wonder more."

"They fly," said he, "in thick and countless legions,
Whirling in one great orbit round the sun ;
And, swiftly coursing through the silent regions
Of empty space, they ever float and run.

"They have no rest—their life is one migration ;
Small bodies banded in unnumbered hosts ;
Some drop—not from fatigue, but gravitation—
Upon the mountains, continents, and coasts.

"Though thousands slake their fiery substance, hissing
In the deep waters of the lonely seas,
And every year are some old comrades missing,
Yet still the flock is like a swarm of bees.

“ And when, across our orbit swiftly going,
They reach the limits of our atmosphere,
Their dark, invisible bodies, hot and glowing,
Blaze as they pass, then swiftly disappear.

“ And some have dropped near human habitations,
Piercing the solid surface of the ground,
And been held sacred by the simple nations
On whose paternal acres they were found.

“ Mongolian Chiefs and Caliphs had their sabres
Forged of celestial ore, that they might be
Divinely armed against unpleasant neighbours,
Or against slaves aspiring to be free.

“ A monk at Crema, when devoutly praying,
Received in answer such a heavy stone
That he was silenced—God’s own missile slaying
His humble priest. His death is not alone.

“ Another, taking his accustomed airing
About Milan, was likewise roughly floored,
And picked up dead. And also two seafaring
Swedes met the same fate, they were killed on board.”

I answered. If such masses of hot iron
As that in our museum ever fell
On any town, not greater woes environ
The Russian fortress from our shot and shell.

I've often stood before it filled with wonder,
Thinking of how it came here long ago—
Of its terrific fall in claps of thunder,
When first it came to settle here below.

How, after rushing through unmeasured distance
In the eternal ages of the past,
It could descend to such a mean existence,
And deign to be exhibited at last.

The weary crowds who daily past it wander,
Then go to see some foreign raree show,
Would, if they knew its value, stay and ponder
Over the most outlandish thing we know.

A thing, not only foreign to the nation,
But to the very planet where we dwell,
Wherein it holds as strange a situation
As Orpheus in the corridors of Hell.

I've touched it with a thrill of such deep feeling
As vibrates through a saint's excited nerves
When he receives the sacred wafer kneeling,
And touches—tastes—the deity he serves.

Not that I worship stars—but in this relie
Of some bright courser round the central sun,
I would receive a messenger angelic
From other kingdoms of the Eternal One.

Saying, "Not only is the earth material,
And made of substance having bulk and weight;
But meteor-stars, so brilliant and aërial,
Are in themselves the same, though not so great."

And so does matter glorify its being,
Flying above us as on angels' wings,
And we become philosophers on seeing
These fragments of the universe of things.

NOTE.

Humboldt, who always looks upon nature with the eye of a poet as well as the profound knowledge of a man of science, provided the materials for this poem in his wonderful book on the universe. (*Cosmos*, Bohn's edition, vol. i. from p. 97 to p. 126; also vol. iv. from p. 566 to p. 596.) The assistance derived from other sources is inconsiderable, and does not need specific acknowledgment.

The large mass of meteoric iron alluded to is under the window in the first room of the north gallery in the British Museum. It was sent from Buenos Ayres by Mr. Parish, in 1826. This fragment weighs 1400 lbs. It is supposed to be part of a large mass found at Otumpa, in the Gran Chaco Gualamba, in S. America, by Don Rubin de Celis, who estimated the weight of the whole at fifteen tons. It was, therefore, no exaggeration to compare the effects of such a missile to the havoc of shot and shell.

IODINE.

THERE was a time when we were taught
The elements were only four ;
The curse of old Saint Athanase
Might cling to those who dreamed of more.
But now we have enlarged our faith,
And Science widens all her range,
Till recent knowledge holds as truth
What erst had sounded false and strange.

But none of all our elements
Is half so wonderful as thee,
Strange extract of the golden weeds,—
Strange daughter of the eternal sea !
And of our sixty elements
Not one has properties like thine,
Thou mistress of the solar light,
O violet-fuming Iodine !

Oppressed by Nature's vastest forms,
Lie hid in many a mountain chain
Poor souls who dwell from year to year
In shadowed darkness of the brain.
For these thou hast a potent charm
That fills their hearts with health and light,
And makes a sunrise in the soul
That slept before in haunted night.

I've seen about the western isles,
Encircling zones of golden weed,
A wondrous spirit lurks therein —
By fire alone it may be freed!
An artist-substance that receives
Distinct impressions line for line,
More sensitive than painter's eye,
The wonder-working Iodine!

NOTE.

Iodine derives its name from a Greek word, signifying "violet-coloured;" but the transcendent beauty of the colour of its vapour requires further elucidation than simply saying that it has a "violet hue." If a little iodine be placed on a hot tile it rises into a magnificent dense vapour, fit for the last scene of a theatrical representation. This remarkable substance was discovered by accident about forty years ago. At that period chemical philosophy was in great repute, owing principally to the brilliant discoveries of Sir Humphry Davy. So singular a substance as iodine was to Davy a source of infinite pleasure. His great aim was to prove its compound nature; but in this he failed; and to this day it is believed to be one of the primitive "elements" of the world we live in. The sea furnishes an inexhaustible supply of iodine. Whatever be the food of sea-weeds, it is certain that iodine forms a portion of their daily banquet; and to these beautiful plants we turn when iodine is to be manufactured for commercial purposes. The inhabitants of the Tyrol are subject to a very painful disease called goitre, or cretinism; for this malady iodine is a perfect cure. Photography tells the whole truth without flattery; and the colours used in this process are only silver and iodine.—SEPTIMUS PIESSE, *in the Mining Journal*.

CORAL ISLANDS.

Down in the Tropic sea,
Where the water is warm and deep,
There are gardens fairer than any bee
Ever saw in its honied sleep.

Flowers of crimson bright,
And green, and purple, and blue,
In the waters deep which the golden light
Of the sun sinks softly through.

And many a proud ship sails,
And many a sea-bird flies,
And fishes swim with silvery scales,
Above where that garden lies.

But the sailor only sees
The ocean barren and bare,
While the fishes know of wondrous trees
That bloom and blossom there.

For whenever they choose, they dive
Where line and plummet fail,
To beds of flowers that feel and live
Like flowers in a fairy tale.

Down in the white sea-sand
They lead a rooted life,
Perhaps to be plucked by the pretty hand
Of the merman's dainty wife.

You have seen the bright red stem
Of the wondrous coral tree ;
But its living flowers—you saw not them—
They died beneath the sea.

You have seen the coral white,
The ghastly skeleton ;
But the living flowers were a fairer sight
That used to grow thereon.

They die—those beautiful links
Between us and the flowers,
Which some despise, but the poet thinks
Most lovely pets of ours.

And the chain is made complete
Between our life and theirs,—
Between the lily pure and sweet,
And man with all his cares.

But not for their hues alone,
 These gardens in the sea
Were by the ocean nursed and sown,
 Or sung in verse by me.

When the lovely flowers are dead,
 And their substance wastes away,
Their skeletons lie on the ocean's bed
 Like wrecks in slow decay.

And over their delicate bones,
 The streams of the lower deep
Lay sand and shell and polished stones
 In many a little heap.

And their descendants bloom
 Above their parents' graves ;
Like a child that plays on its father's tomb,
 They live beneath the waves.

At last they perish too ;
 And the sea brings sand and shell,
And buries them kindly where they grew
 Like soldiers where they fell.

And this goes on and on,
 And the creatures bloom and grow,
Till the mass of death they rest upon
 Comes upward from below.

And reefs of barren rocks
In blue unfathomed seas,
Give rest to the feet of emigrant flocks,
But have no grass nor trees.

But still the breakers break,
And white along the shore
The surf leaps high, and the waters make
Strong barrows as before.

Like barrows made of old
For ancient British chiefs,
Wherein they lie with torques of gold,
Are those long coral reefs.

For many a hundred miles
Those barren reefs extend,
Connecting distant groups of isles
With paths from end to end.

And when the tide is high,
It washes daily food
To hungry mouths, and greedily
Out comes the slimy brood.

Out of the waste of stone,
Like Roderick's merry men,
Out of the heather bleak and lone
In the gloomy Highland glen,

Those swarming millions rise
From their little hollow caves,
And each looks out for a welcome prize
From the drifting of the waves.

And a thousand conscious flowers
Open their fleshy leaves
To the ocean spray, whose snowy showers
The thankful mouth receives.

Like the golden mouths that gape
In the thrush's happy nest,
Open those flowers of starry shape,
When the sea disturbs their rest.

But when the reef has grown
Above the highest tide,
It is a city of lifeless stone,
Whose citizens have died.

For they cannot bear to be
Where the waters never rise,
And each one lifted from the sea,
To the parching sunshine dies.

And bird, or wave, or wind
Brings other seeds to sow ;
And on the rock new tenants find
A soil whereon to grow.

And they have other wants
Than the flowers the ocean fed ;
The hot sun nurses the living plants,
And withers up the dead.

And then on the deepening mould
Of many a hundred years,
When the coral rock is green and old,
A stunted shrub appears ;

And grasses tall and rank,
And herbs that thickly teem
Out of the soil on a lake's green bank,
Or the margin of a stream.

Long ages pass—those isles
Have grown maturely fair ;
Green forests wave, and summer smiles,
And human homes are there.

And in the sunset calms
Swim out with laughing ease,
Shoals of girls from Isles of Palms
In tranquil southern seas,—

The fairest, sweetest fruit
Of the coral's mighty work !
And still in the deep about the root
Of the rock those creatures lurk.

Nothing on earth so small,
Nothing so weak and poor,
But may produce—if it work at all—
Results that shall endure.

The simple men of old,
Who lived and died unknown,
Have left us things more manifold
Than reefs of coral stone.

And we who work to-day
Shall leave results behind,
And build—not isle, nor reef, nor bay—
But the wondrous human mind.

God uses humble hands
To do his bidding here :
The coral shapes extensive lands
Where barren waters were.

And we—myself and you—
However poor and mean,
Shall leave a sign as corals do,
To prove that we have been.*

* This was written after reading the sixth Lecture in Dr. Mantell's *Wonders of Geology*, to which the reader is referred for details.

THE EMPTY PUPA CASE.

“ You cannot turn a pebble in the stream
In May or June,” an angler said to me,
“ Without disturbing things that afterwards
Bright summer flies will be.

“ They lead a pleasant life beneath the stones ;
Some active ones are clad in waterproof,
And others rest in little huts of sand
Beneath a solid roof,

“ In separate chambers lined with silk throughout,
Cemented with a mortar of their own,
Wherein each baby insect is enshrined,
Secluded and alone.

“ Thus pass the hours of growth. The sun of spring
Shines clearly through their native element ;
And all those creatures, now mature and strong,
No longer feel content

“ To lie like worms and reptiles under stones,
Hiding in darkness all the summer days ;
But one by one they leave their place of birth,
Till not a Pupa stays.

“ The March-Brown climbs the stone he dwelt beneath,
And dries himself, and basks in summer heat,
And breathes a lighter element, and tries
To extricate his feet

“ From those old boots, so useful in the stream —
Mere fetters now — and splits his water clothes ;
Leaves the case empty, and exhausted sinks
Beside it to repose.

“ He is not dead — his little crumpled wings
Dry and expand beneath the pleasant sun.
His body grows — he is a thing transformed —
His new life is begun !

“ He skims across the pool where he was born,
On his new wings he soars unto the light ;
Another world — to infancy unknown,
Spreads out before his sight.

“ He never lacks an object of pursuit,
Indulging safely every healthy taste ;
His life is short, but of his precious hours
No moment runs to waste.”

I heard the history of the Pupa case,
The simple life of its inhabitant,
And thought — how wise an insect to cast off
A form it does not want !

But men go pinched and bound in swaddling clothes,
Ignoring the enlargement of the mind ;
'T were wiser thus to let our wings expand,
And leave our shells behind.

Yet when, as truth advances, we renounce
Notions of science, narrow, out of date,
Some who regard the empty Pupa case
Sincerely mourn our fate,

And say, "Poor soul ! he threw his armour off,
And now, no doubt, is dead in helplessness."
Their dull compassion could not be bestowed
Where it was needed less.

For he, its object, on the brilliant wings
Of late-unfolded thought doth onward fly,
Disporting in an element more pure
Than that wherein they lie.

His faculties are bettered by the change ;
A new world lies before — a wider field
For enterprise, whose wealth must ever be
From ignorance concealed.

Whilst others sleep in shallow pools of thought,
In ancient channels, mourning him as dead,
And holding inquests on the empty shell
That he so proudly shed,

He lives in clearer light, with broader views—
Swifter progression—freedom more complete.
It was his very nature to cast off
Those fetters from his feet!

THE BRITANNIA BRIDGE.

SOME have iron thews and sinews, some are muscular
of mind ;

Learned savans, skilful blacksmiths, each are noble in
their kind.

But to give the savan's wisdom to the hammer and the
shears,

Come those intermediate workers,—England's civil
engineers.

So does thought gain form and substance, and we see
its force at length

Doing wonders far surpassing all the feats of brutal
strength.

Let it organise the masses, let it make them wise and
strong,

So that one man's head shall govern all the labour of
the throng.

For mankind—the race—has in it all the elements of
power,
Brain and muscle—age in seedtime—early manhood
in its flower.

Ships sail down the straits of Menai, where the current
swiftly streams,
And above their lofty mainmasts hang those long
colossal beams,

Hollow corridors of iron, stretched across from shore to
shore,
Often murmuring with music like the thunder's distant
roar,

When the swift trains cross the channel, people thinking
as they go
Of the iron walls about them, or the ships that sail
below.

Long those mighty tubes shall vibrate in the pathway
of the winds,
Poems wrought in beaten iron by our most creative
minds !

Long those mighty tubes shall murmur on their solid
marble towers,
Singing to succeeding ages of the enterprise of ours !

FOOTPRINTS IN SANDSTONE.*

LISTEN whilst I tell a story of old Time the sure and
 slow ;
 Let the subject of my legend be what happened long
 ago,
 Yet no dim and vague tradition, but a fact we really
 know.

Legends of the mythic Arthur, all that Spenser sweetly
 sings
 Of our ancient British heroes and long lines of famous
 kings,
 These are credible no longer—these are all forgotten
 things.

* See Mantell's *Wonders of Geology*, (6th edition), p. 553 ; and Lyell's *Manual of Elementary Geology*, (5th edition), pp. 339, 349, 402, 403, 417.

Shakspeare's shreds of ancient story, Hamlet, Lear, and
Cymbeline,
Milton's song of Paradise, and Homer's " tale of Troy
divine,"
These are ancient, noble subjects—modern still compared to mine.

I have seen a block of sandstone with old characters
thereon,
Older than the oldest treasure from Egyptian deserts
won,
Older than the arrowheads of Nineveh or Babylon.

Written, reader, long aforetime, written on the ocean
sand,
Long before in God's creation worked the wondrous
human hand ;
Yet to human hearts it speaketh—let us read and
understand,

How long since this block of sandstone was with
mystic signs imprest,
How long in her secret archives Nature suffered it to
rest,
Which no student ever enters, nor destructive worms
infest.

This we cannot tell in numbers—cycles, centuries,
and years
Fail us, as they fail to tell of starlight which to-night
appears,
How long it has travelled swiftly since it left its native
spheres.

But we see whole generations, for their bones are side
by side,
And we know that vast creations in that lapse have
lived and died,
For they lie above each other whom the shelves of
rock divide.

And in every shelf of rock we see a mighty gulph of
time.
So the world seems older—older—and her story more
sublime ;
Farther still her first creation !—farther still her golden
prime !

Long ago—I know not how long—on a sandbank near
the sea,
Stepped with awkward gait a creature, and a frog he
seemed to be,
But on earth there dwells no longer such a mighty
frog as he.

Gulliver, in his adventures in that huge gigantic land,
Where all nature was colossal, all things marvellously
grand,
May have seen such creatures walking slowly on the
ocean sand.

So those deep mysterious footprints on the yielding
sand were made ;
And the tide came calmly, gently ; and its little breakers
laid
Over them a thin deposit, which the rivulets conveyed

From the inland plains and valleys down unto the
ancient shore,
And the sea retired and left it smooth and barren
as before ;
But the marks of that inscription were preserved for
evermore.

Every day the waves brought matter from the ocean's
deepest bed,
And they laid their sandy treasures where the creature
used to tread ;
Tracts of sand with marks of ripples did the tidewaves
daily spread.

Since those days the land has altered ; changing are all
things that be,
Save the splendour of the planets and the music of the
sea,
Still the same the ocean murmurs in its old accustomed
key.

But the land has altered strangely since the time when
creeping things,
Lizards like gigantic dragons such as quaint old
Spenser sings,
Mighty reptiles, male and female, were the planets'
queens and kings,

When deep forests, tropic jungles, arborescent shrubs
and ferns,
Flourished in our northern region, where the pale
mechanic earns
Sadly a laborious living, and the furnace fiercely burns.

Sinking, sinking, all the country slowly sank beneath
the waves ;
And the ocean swept the forests, reptiles, dragons, to
their graves ;
Afterwards with shells old Ocean all the conquered
country paves,

Singing, "It is mine for ever!"—not for ever, not for
long,
For the subterranean forces laughed at Ocean's boast-
ful song,
Lifting up the sunken country, for their backs were
broad and strong,

Till the sea-shells were uplifted even to the mountain
peak.
Far below the waves are moaning, but with voices
faint and weak,
Sorrowing for their lost dominion and the toys they
vainly seek.

Boundless is the retrospection of the great eternal past,
And the mind begins to weary dwelling on a theme so
vast.
Let us dwell on it no longer. Man is on the earth at
last,

Building towns and blasting quarries ; and within the
solid stone
Finding traces—footprints merely—having fingers
like his own ;
Something has been there before him, ere the rock was
fully grown !

* * * * *

Woman's vows in Arab proverbs on the ocean sand are
traced,
And the storm-waves of her trials leave her heart a
barren waste.
'T is a false and foolish proverb—deep they lie, but
not effaced !

Deeper in her faithful bosom lie her vows so "little
worth,"
Like these clear and sharp inscriptions in the bosom of
the earth,
Growing harder, more enduring, every moment since
their birth.

Warlike hosts have crossed the desert, many a well-
appointed train,
But they have not left a vestige, and we seek their
tracks in vain,
Fainter than a reptile's footprint, or the pitted marks
of rain !

Great men often journey bravely through a weary
pilgrimage,
Leaving not a mark behind them speaking to a future
age,
Neither public reputation nor a single printed page.

Others who are all unworthy, treading on a lucky
place,
Leave impressions deep and lasting, which the years
will not efface ;
Earning thus immortal glory in the annals of the race.

CASTS.

WHEN the great Napoleon lay
A heap of lifeless clay,
When his proud career was ended on his dreary prison
isle,
When all was dark within,
His features pale and thin,
And the selfish lips lay open and relaxed into a smile,

They knew it could not last ;
So they took a careful cast
Of the stern face of the conqueror so beautiful in death.
And the bronze is dark and cold,
But the maggot of the mould
Shall never kiss its brazen lips, although they have no
breath.

So we keep the handsome face
Of the tyrant of the race,
But Nature models carefully the children of her hand ;
And little trivial things,
Like Earth's most famous kings,
Leave their lovely forms behind them in the marble of
the land.

And their images shall tell
That Nature loved them well,
And made their form enduring when their substance
was no more.
So she modelled trunks of trees,
And the fishes of the seas,
And the fern-leaves of the forest, and the shells upon
the shore.

And her cabinets of rock,
Let us enter and unlock,
And gather of her treasures in the bosom of the earth ;
The medals of her reign,
And the records that have lain
Unopened by our ancestors who never knew their worth.

ENGINE DRIVING.

“STAND steady, sir! close up, close up!
 The fire will warm your toes;
 Stand close, or you ’ll be wet with steam!
 All right, Tom?—Off she goes!”

I stood between two bearded men,
 Like demons dark and grim;
 The fire was hot—the devil himself
 Would have thought it hot for him.

A tap was turned—a deafening scream
 Pierced through from ear to ear;
 Beneath us shook the iron floor,
 And rattled the engine-gear.

The wind blew cold—the steam rolled off
 In many a cloudy mass,
 And the March moon dropped a spot of light
 On the dome of polished brass.

Away we went!—above the roofs
Of a town that slept below,
And mills with windows lighted up
In many a fiery row.

Away we went to the crimson west,
After the sunken sun;
And on the ridges of the hills
The evening star did run.

Our speed increased—the bearded men
Looked out both left and right—
A sharp look-out the driver kept,
For it was almost night.

And soon I heard a louder noise,
A loud and fearful roar—
The stoker pulled an iron chain,
And opened the furnace door.

And lo! a burst of light shone forth,
A dazzling, steady glare
From the white-hot furnace suddenly—
It had been prisoned there!

The light shone full on faces grim,
The roar was long and loud;
And over our heads there swiftly ran
A silver stream of cloud.

It rushed and ran along the roof
Of the arch through which we sped,
With solid rock on every side,
And a mountain overhead !

The light shone full on faces grim ;
The roar had died away ;
The hill that we had hurried through
Behind us dimly lay.

And bright was the glow on the stoker's face,
And black the sky behind ;
But straight before, the evening star
Grew brighter in the wind.

A factory with a thousand lamps
Beneath our dizzy height
We passed, as swiftly as a bird
That holds its homeward flight.

Then down a lonely vale we went,
Between a frozen mere,
And crags that stood against the sky,
So cold, and deep, and clear.

And many a dark ravine we crossed,
And many a hill passed through ;
And as the night advanced, the moon
And planets brighter grew.

And when the last faint flush had died
Out of the western sky,
Our shadows were distinct and swift,
We could not pass them by.

Over the roughest land they flew,
And where the banks were steep,
Sank down, and on the quarried rocks
An equal speed did keep.

Long glaring lines of lurid fires
Flared past us as we sped,
But still the moon hung steadily
In the deep sky overhead.

She followed us from first to last
Till we arrived at home,
And always kept her spot of light
Upon the brazen dome.

THE NIGHT TRAIN.

THE night's as dark as pitch,
Heavily falls the rain ;
But through the darkness and the storm
Speeds the Night Train.

We sit on cushioned seats
In a little snug room ;
The window-pane keeps out the rain,
And the lamp keeps out the gloom.

We are darting through a hill ;
Through subterranean halls
Thunder our thousand wheels, yet still
The steady lamp light falls

On the tunnel side that streams
Across the window-pane ;
'T is gone — the noise has ceased — we are
In the outer night again.

Past us on the railway side
Fly lines of glaring fires,
And now I see wave up and down
The long festoons of wires,

On which, unseen at midnight dark,
And when the sun is high,
Our swift, invisible messengers,
The sparks of lightning, fly.

And as they go they overtake
A hundred flying trains,
They pass them by as swallows pass
Old, clumsy, rustic wains.

So swift and silent in the world
Is thought—it moves unseen;
And in the darkness finds the goal,
And leaps what lies between.

Action is slower, and the world
Moves like the peopled train,
With labour and tumultuous noise,
And cries of fear and pain.

'T is noble, through the stormy night
To keep appointed time,
Although the rule of watch and clock
May not be so sublime

As careless life in Arab tents,
Or ships that slowly sail ;
Or that lone horseman who is lost
At night in many a tale,

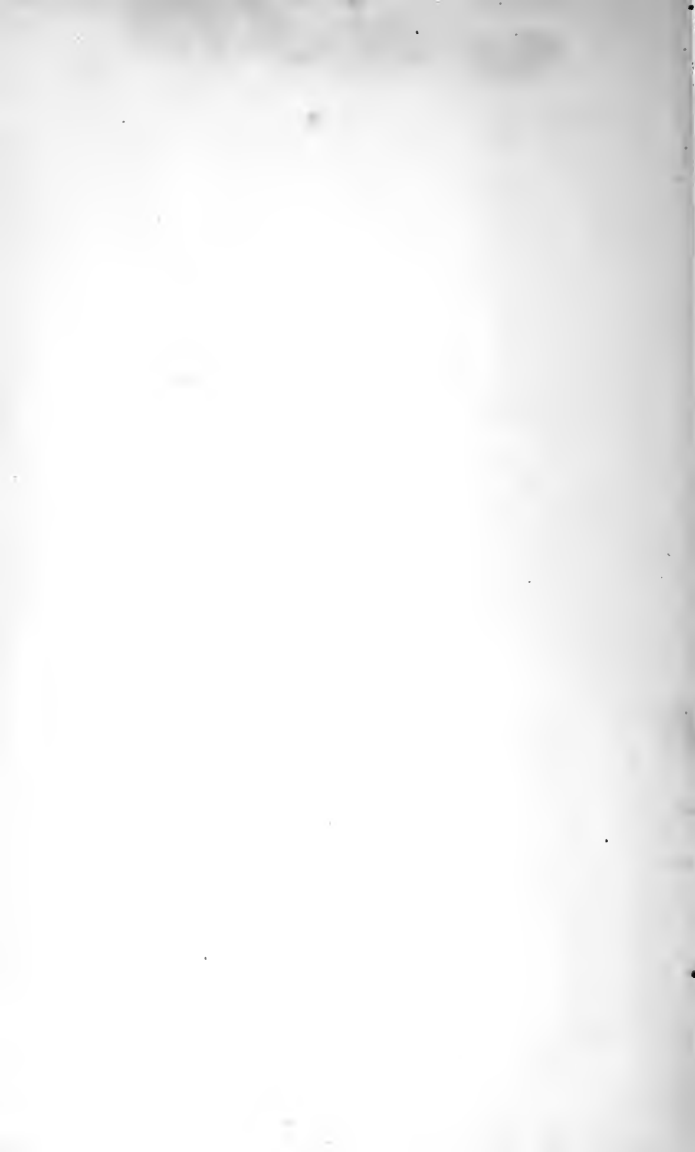
I know not. If the planets keep
Their hours both day and night,
And poets praise them none the less,
Nor quarrel with their light,

We need not call our faithful train
A thing of humble prose,
Because he follows day and night
Examples such as those.

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